Fashionable dis-ease: Promoting health and leisure at Saratoga Springs, New York and the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860

Thomas A. Chambers

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FASHIONABLE DIS-EASE:
PROMOTING HEALTH AND LEISURE AT
SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK AND THE VIRGINIA SPRINGS,
1790-1860

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Thomas A. Chambers
1999
APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thomas A. Chambers

Approved, January 1999

Robert A. Gross

Carol Sheriff

Chandos Michael Brown

Dona Brown, University of Vermont

Barbara Bellows, Middlebury College
DEDICATION

For Anne Elizabeth Ward, P.H.T.

and

Mom and Dad
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ABSTRACT

Throughout the early years of the American republic and the first half of the nineteenth century, people journeyed from across the nation and Europe to the bubbling mineral springs of upstate New York and western Virginia in search of a medical cure and pleasant company. Promoters lauded the springs for their restorative powers, fashionable clientele, and picturesque scenery. These dubious attributes combined with the profit motive to create one of the earliest and most successful components of the American tourism and leisure industry. Marketing and producing the mineral waters, as well as the spa experience itself, involved innovation, business acumen, and substantial amounts of capital. Proprietors of these health resorts stood at the forefront of American social and commercial change.

Just as the business of the spas changed, so too did its social setting. While at the springs visitors formed a distinctive culture. They performed complicated rituals of health and leisure that created, reinforced, and projected the aspirations of the national elite. In the process, they exposed the excesses of American culture. With contemporary society divided by the forces of economic and social change, the refined world of the springs seemed a refuge from daily pressures and anxieties. Yet few found peace there. Visitors to the spas negotiated gender roles and social position in an effort to separate the genteel from the crude, and sift the natural elite from social pretenders. At the spas, Americans wrestled with basic tensions between mobility and stability, morality and behavior, gender and social roles, and wealth and status that divided American culture in the first century after independence. Saratoga Springs, New York and the Virginia springs resembled each other more than they differed. Even on the eve of the Civil War, filling hotels and convincing people to drink the waters followed a similar pattern in both North and South. But sectional rivalries strained the easy-going sociability of life at the springs. Attempts to coalesce a national aristocracy in this climate of social change and anxiety proved futile, especially with the advent of sectional conflict in the late 1850s.
FASHIONABLE DIS-EASE:
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1790-1860
Sign from Gideon Putnam’s Tavern

Picture Collection, New York Public Library
Introduction

The sign that hung outside Putnam’s Tavern in Saratoga Springs, New York during the 1790s sent a dubious message. It depicted Israel Putnam, a famous Revolutionary War general, reaching into a wolf’s den and pulling the animal out by its scruff. Legend held that a generation before the founding of Saratoga the general led his neighbors in a hunt for the beast after it depleted their sheep herds for several successive winters. Despite repeated attempts by Putnam and his neighbors in northeastern Connecticut to eliminate the nuisance, the wily wolf and her whelps repeatedly escaped, returning to prey on the farmers’ sheep again and again. But during the winter of 1743 Putnam tracked the wolf through the snow to a cave near his home. The entire town turned out to aid in the destruction of its nemesis, but repeated efforts by smoke, sulphur flares, and dogs to drive the wolf from her den failed. After his black servant and several townspeople refused to enter the cave, Israel Putnam volunteered to extract the wolf over the protestations of danger from his neighbors. One failed attempt later Putnam shot and killed the wolf. Cheers greeted Putnam as he emerged from the cave, hailed as the town’s savior. The legend of Putnam and the Wolf spread across the New England frontier, a legend that grew after his service in the Seven Years’ War and bravery during the Revolution at Bunker Hill.1 Presumably it was by

associating himself with his cousin's fame that the Saratoga Springs hotel's proprietor, Gideon Putnam, hoped to attract business. But the sign also symbolizes many of the tensions present at American mineral springs during their infancy in the late eighteenth century, adolescence in the early national period, and maturity during the Jacksonian and antebellum eras. Just like his forebear had saved his neighbors, Gideon Putnam and his fellow springs entrepreneurs faced uncertainty and possible failure in building their fledgling industry into a mainstay of American tourism. To do so they appealed to the cultural impulses of America's emerging elite for health, relaxation, and exclusive company amidst the wrenching social changes of early nineteenth-century America. That mineral springs in Virginia and New York disappointed the elite was due to the eagerness of springs entrepreneurs to embrace the changes and advantages of the Market Revolution, a process that both they and their elite guests engaged in and profited from, but from which many Americans sought refuge. Within the roots of the springs' success were the seeds of disillusion.

This study seeks to analyze the major social, cultural, and economic changes of early nineteenth-century America through the lens of mineral springs resorts in New York and Virginia. What makes the springs so important is their situation at the crossroads of a number of historiographical issues. As businesses they marked a key component of the emerging American tourist industry and the larger Market Revolution. But the springs were a business that existed and prospered because of cultural impulses—the

desire of Americans to improve their health and mingle with the rich and famous as the nation attempted to define a national elite. Americans tested the emerging doctrines of republican simplicity, refinement, egalitarianism, and sectionalism at the springs, which evolved into a sort of national social laboratory. The key social and cultural transformations of early national and antebellum America—urbanization, industrialization, and social stratification in the North; the expansion of slavery, increased economic diversity, social mobility, and the weakening of the tidewater elite in the South—influenced the social and cultural setting at the springs. There a national culture of contention addressed the tensions between old and new money, male and female, and North and South that shaped nineteenth-century America.\(^2\) The similarities between Northern and Southern springs are striking—whether in business practice, promotion, medical orthodoxy, social practice and class formation, or gender roles—and reveal a nearly national springs culture on the eve of the Civil War. The project of creating an American elite was almost successful at the springs, but faltered on the most divisive issue of the age, slavery. It was at the springs, one of the few places where a broad geographic variety of wealthy Americans gathered, that the national elite, and to some extent the nation, defined itself.

The efforts by many leading Americans to form a national elite focused on the springs, a locus of the nation's many physical and cultural variations. Drawn from a broad geographic area, the regional diversity of visitors influenced the social setting. A southern magazine reported that "Almost every state in the Union, and some of the nations of Europe may find their

representatives at the White Sulphur,” Virginia’s premier spring, during the high season of July and August. Indeed, extant hotel ledgers from two Virginia springs include visitors from twenty four states and two foreign countries. The situation was much the same to the north. Writing from New York’s Saratoga Springs, one guidebook author claimed that “Here may be seen men from the North and South;—citizens from New York in trim Parisian fashion, and men from the Southern States in garbs of a more sternly simple character; while various specimens of humanity from the other side of the Atlantic exhibit the peculiar characteristics of their respective nations, in tongue, manner, and costume.” These guests represented a diversity of region, but a uniformity of class. They were, above all, members of the elite. Some maintained the facade of invalidism, but the search for improved health provided many more with an excuse for frivolity. The presence of so many “gay and fashionable” people lent an air of cosmopolitan sophistication unattainable at a remote southern plantation or a northern merchant’s estate or counting-house. Drawn mostly from “the wealthy class” of Americans, ladies and gentlemen “mingl[ed] harmoniously” at the springs. According to one observer, during the fashionable season “the whole elite of the Union”

3 “Visit to the Virginia Springs, During the Summer of 1834,” Southern Literary Messenger, I (May 1835): 475.
4 Yellow Sulphur Springs ledger, 1857-1858; Buffalo Lithia Springs ledger, 1858, both from the Virginia Historical Society.
5 Our Summer Retreats: A Hand Book to All the Chief Waterfalls, Springs, Mountain and Seaside Resorts, and other Places of Interest in the United States (New York: T. Nelson and Sons, 1858), 32.
7 James Drew diary, 21 August 1846, New-York Historical Society; Six Weeks in Fauquier, Being the Substance of a Series of Familiar Letters, Illustrating the Scenery, Localities, Medicinal Virtues, and General Characteristics of the White Sulphur Springs, at Warrenton, Fauquier County, Virginia; Written in 1838, to a gentleman in New England; By a Visitor (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839), 33.
assembled there. But the springs were more than what the historian Carl Bridenbaugh called a gathering place for the early American aristocracy.

They were also a battleground where Americans fought many of the important contests over their economy, society, and culture. Perhaps the most immediate centered around the success or failure of the springs industry. Gideon Putnam and his colleagues faced the daunting prospect of doing business in an environment of scarce capital, poor transportation networks, insufficient revenues, an undefined clientele, and fierce competition. Yet they succeeded in establishing mineral springs resorts in New York and Virginia through shameless promotion, keen business practices, and a supply of innovative ideas nearly as inexhaustible as the waters themselves. Springs promoters from North and South shared an enthusiasm for the market economy and a willingness to experiment, an eagerness that many of their guests did not share.

Such cultural contests over the consequences of the Market Revolution and, ultimately, aesthetics shaped the physical design of the springs. Part of the proprietors' effort to succeed included cultivating an image of the springs as a bucolic retreat from the pressures of everyday life. Isolated from crowded, filthy, hot cities, the springs offered fresh air, rural scenes, and carefully designed and manicured surroundings. At the springs, men and women could find rest and relaxation. Many guests, however, doubted that the reality of the springs met their idealized appearance.

Likewise, claims that the mineral waters would cure a host of diseases failed to come true. The springs rarely equaled their promises of a rural idyll.

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relaxing retreat, or medical panacea. But springs visitors continued to arrive, convinced that even if the waters were not efficacious, they at least offered a temporary respite from the excesses of American society and a tonic to invigorate invalids' systems for a return to their homes and daily lives.

The society that developed at resorts like Saratoga Springs and its Virginia counterparts emphasized healthy living, but only as a corollary to the competitive display of status and fashion. At the springs men and women engaged in the very same contests of social standing and popularity that they purported to have left behind on their journey. In the supposedly egalitarian society of Jacksonian America, the springs served as a national arena for the contest between old and new money for social superiority. Drawn by the prospect of fashionable society and the opportunity to mix with their peers, elite Americans unwittingly encountered the same middling classes and new money they so despised at home.

While there, the elite attempted to strengthen the ties that geographic distance had rendered incomplete and to solidify their class alliances. In this context the springs served as a marriage market where men and women from across the country negotiated gender roles in hopes of finding a suitable spouse and building a national elite. But the presence of social pretenders and intra-class rivalries created a hyper-competitive arena of marital speculation. To police this market the springs' social arbiters humiliated anyone who attempted to climb too far on the social ladder or bend the rules of courtship to the breaking point. Amidst the regional and social diversity of the springs, where few people knew each other well, the possibility of deception and betrayal lurked constantly. Rakes, coquettes, social frauds, and the disappointment of a society that failed to meet the elite's expectations as the
nouveau riche invaded their once exclusive retreats added an element of social tension and danger to springs life.

Finally, the threat of sectional crisis interrupted the springs’ jovial social scene. While some Americans envisioned the springs as a training ground for a national elite united by wealth, leisure pursuits, and social affinities, the reality proved far different. Although wealthy Americans from all sections of the country inter-mingling at the springs and created a common springs culture, by the 1850s the controversy over slavery divided the springs into two increasingly isolated societies and destroyed cultural arbiters’ dreams of forming a national elite.

In the end Gideon Putnam and his fellow springs proprietors subdued the wolf and built a highly successful business, society, and culture at America’s mineral springs. But their efforts were for naught. They, like Thomas Jefferson, feared that the wolf they held by the ears—here in the form of the social, cultural, economic, and political tensions of antebellum America—would destroy them if they let go. Indeed, the wolf they so precariously held for half a century escaped their grasp at last and returned in the form of sectional conflict over slavery, destroying the springs society that proprietors had so carefully and laboriously built.
James Calwell and Gideon Putnam shared the same dream: each wanted to build a grand hotel and develop successful resorts that catering to the invalids who drank the mineral waters at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia and Saratoga Springs, New York. Both men chose isolated spots to seek their fortunes; at the beginning of the nineteenth century neither White Sulphur Springs nor Saratoga Springs could claim more than a seasonal population or a meager reputation as a spa. But Calwell and Putnam, with the help of their heirs, transformed their resorts into the ultimate springs businesses in the antebellum South and North. Both men shared a faith in the market economy and its benefits, along with a willingness to take business risks. Their paths to success, however, followed different business routes and catered to divergent clienteles, owing in part on the economic and social circumstances of their regions in early national and antebellum America. Practice, not principle, separated their efforts to build the mineral springs industry. White Sulphur Springs remained in the possession of the Calwell family until the late 1850s, always operating as a family-owned proprietorship. Putnam’s heirs sold off portions of his landholdings in Saratoga Springs after the 1820s, enabling a number of independent hotels, fountains, and bathing houses to compete directly with the old family business. Yet both Calwell and Putnam helped initiate the springs boom, which was part of a larger growth in American tourism. Imitators in Virginia or Saratoga Springs looked to these entrepreneurs for inspiration and models.
Northern and Southern springs proprietors and boosters believed in the possibilities of the market to advance their personal prospects, while their clientele proved more ambivalent. Yet to a great extent, the businessmen succeeded. While in 1790 Virginia boasted only five mineral springs resorts and Saratoga looked to nearby Ballston Spa’s rustic taverns as a prototype resort town, by 1860 at least fifty-three springs establishments dotted western Virginia and ten large hotels lined Saratoga’s avenues.¹ James Calwell, Gideon Putnam, and their descendants and imitators employed innovative business practices and clever promotional ploys to help launch the American tourism industry and spur the commercialization of leisure. Their story marks an important, but overlooked, milestone in the Market Revolution, and reveals the extent to which the commercialization of leisure permeated American culture, society, and economics in both the North and South.²

Creating the springs industry took years of development. “Rustic” best describes the early conditions at White Sulphur Springs and Saratoga Springs during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Settlers in the springs

¹ The only substantial Virginia springs in the early 1790s were Bath, or Berkeley Springs, in Morgan County, Capon Springs in Hampshire County, Sweet Springs in Monroe County, and Warm Springs and Hot Springs in Bath County. See Stan Cohen, *Historic Springs of the Virginias: A Pictorial History* (Charleston, West Virginia: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1981); Frederick Chambers, *Map of the Village of Saratoga Springs, Saratoga County, New York* (Philadelphia: Richard Clark, 1858), Saratoga Springs City Historian’s Office.

regions discovered the mineral waters and their curative powers by following animal trails and talking with local Indians. They visited the springs on a seasonal, sporadic basis as early as 1778 in the case of the White, and by 1771 at Saratoga. Visitors pitched their own tents or found a place to sleep in one of the rugged log cabins around the springs.\(^3\) When Timothy Dwight visited Saratoga Springs in 1792, he found the area "surrounded by an absolute forest, spreading every way to a great distance. There was not a house within two or three miles, so far as I had opportunity to observe, except a miserable cottage or two in their near neighborhood."\(^4\) Many visitors arrived in covered wagons and slept in beds in the back, since accommodations at the spring were so poor. The itinerant diarist Elkanah Watson found "excessively bad accommodation" in "a wretched tavern" during his 1790 visit. He counted only a dozen people congregated at the spring that summer. In his opinion, Saratoga Springs was "enveloped in rudeness and seclusion, with no accommodations appropriate to civilized man." He and the other campers climbed over logs and through brambles to reach the High Rock Spring, where a wooden spout jammed into a crevice in the rock spurted water into their glasses. When not frequented by people, the springs were a place "where cattle and sheep are fond of licking and geese and pigeons delight to resort."

The scant humans bathed in "an open log hut, with a large trough, similar to

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those in use for feeding swine, which receives the water from the spring. Into this you roll from a bench."\(^5\)

Life at the Virginia springs was not much better. As at Saratoga, a "Bason hollowed out for bathing" served the patients at Augusta Warm Springs, and mineral deposits covered the wooden trough that conveyed water from the spring at White Sulphur.\(^6\) Yet the springs proved popular, despite what Thomas Jefferson called their "total want of accommodation for the sick."\(^7\)

Even with these disparaging evaluations of the springs, Calwell and Putnam knew a good business opportunity when they saw one. Others had promoted the springs before them, but few proved as successful. In fact, taking the waters had been popular among America's upper classes since the late-seventeenth century, when Bostonians visited nearby Lynn Red Springs and William Penn noted the discovery of springs around Philadelphia.\(^8\) By the late 1760s Stafford Springs, Connecticut attracted New England's sick and fashionable in great numbers, becoming, in one estimation, "the New England Bath," a reference to England's pre-eminent watering place and the cultural model for American springs.\(^9\) Indeed, the imitation of England's

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premier mineral water resort composed a key ingredient of America’s early springs establishments. When the South’s most famous resort, located in northern Virginia, boomed in the 1780s, promoters gave it the same name as its English counterpart, Bath. And when residents of the fledgling Hot Springs and Warm Springs formed a new county in the Virginia mountains, they chose to call their new entity Bath County. By duplicating the famous spa’s name, they hoped to imitate its success.

Naming American resorts after famous English spas was more than an attempt to cash in on their good name. Resort towns like Bath helped initiate the commercialization of leisure in eighteenth-century England, a process that crossed the Atlantic and set the model for American spas.10 During the Revolutionary era, many Americans visited European resorts as well and compared them with their colonial-style counterparts. Whether at Bath or a continental spa like Baden-Baden later in the century, Americans deemed the European spas superior to their own: “the grounds are much more improved and the country all around highly cultivated.” That Americans visited England’s spas during the Revolution is striking—but that these Americans came from the upper echelons of Anglo-American society and possessed both the means to travel abroad and the political connections to do so during wartime is not. Consider Gabriel Manigault, a Charleston merchant, planter, and politician, whose business and cultural connections with England included trade and a son practicing law there. Or Elkanah Watson, who after carrying American diplomatic dispatches to France during the Revolution established himself in business, only to fail and return to America after the

war. Both these men belonged to an Anglo-American elite that shared a culture that a political event like the Revolution could not destroy. They, and other elite Americans like them, held on to the cultural values and standards of England for at least a generation, when Americans finally began establishing their cultural independence from their colonial parent.11

Developing an American spa culture composed an important part of this cultural independence, and helped define the national elite. If their cultural institutions equaled those of England, then men like Manigault and Watson could begin to feel that they belonged to a distinctively American elite.

In this context Americans constantly evaluated the springs based upon European models. American spas, it was conceded, resembled “the State of Bath in Eng’d in the barbarous days.” Early on, Americans preferred the sophistication and luxury of the European spas to their own springs. Ironically, British travelers had a better opinion of the American spas. Lacking the cultural inferiority complex of many Americans, they found the rusticity of American springs quaint and devoid of the social excesses of English spas. Some European visitors even questioned the mania for imitation. When the spa at Warm Springs changed its name to Bath, because the proprietors “wished to give more importance to their warm spring by honoring it with a name which came from the former mother country,” the French visitor Ferdinand-Marie Bayard objected. The resort did not need the name, he argued, because America possessed enough natural beauty and cultural sophistication to prosper “without seeking outside of your native land borrowed ornaments.” But Americans, especially the conservative,

11 Mary S. McDuffie, Baden-Baden, to Uncle, 15 July 1854, Folder 33, Box 3, Singleton Family Papers, South Caroliniana Collection, University of South Carolina [USC]; Gabriel Manigault, Bath, 20 December 1777, mss. diary, Folder 8, Box 1, Manigault Family Papers, USC; Elkanah Watson, Bath, 20 November 1782, Journal B, Folder 3, Box 2, Elkanah Watson Papers, New York State Library and Archives [NYSLA].
largely Federalist group at the springs, continued to look to England for cultural models. Only by equaling them could American springs earn the cultural legitimacy that the elite demanded. And American springs did so at a remarkably fast rate. Just fifteen years after his initial visit to Saratoga Springs, Elkanah Watson revised his earlier criticism. Saratoga might “become eventually the Bath of America.”

To achieve this standard American springs proprietors like James Calwell and Gideon Putnam hoped to duplicate the commercialization of leisure that placed English spas at the forefront of social and economic change a half century earlier. In addition to English spas, America offered several examples of mildly successful springs resorts. Sweet Springs, just seventeen miles south of Calwell’s White Sulphur Springs, attracted visitors in the years after the Revolution. The first hotel rose in 1792 and was filled with guests every summer. The much older resort at Hot Springs hosted invalids in a rustic inn and bath house as early as 1766, while neighboring Warm Springs, just five miles up the road, offered similar accommodations in 1761. Each enjoyed considerable success as a resort for a small number of invalids willing to suffer spartan accommodations and dull company for the prospect of a cure. But they were not the wildly popular springs resorts that American entrepreneurs dreamed of building. When Gideon Putnam could ride

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14 Cohen, Historic Springs of Virginia, 56, 113, 164.
seven miles south from his home in Saratoga Springs and see a growing resort at Ballston Springs, where four taverns and guest houses catered to hundreds of annual visitors in 1792, he envisioned something grand for his fledgling town. By the early 1800s, Ballston Springs catered to the wealthy, fashionable, and sick from all parts of the new nation, and Putnam envisioned his resort as its rival.15

What separated Calwell and Putnam and their resorts from their predecessors and competitors was their ability to seize upon the springs phenomenon and build it into a sizable industry. More striking still is that neither man possessed a background in promoting mineral springs or managing hotels—but each controlled a keen business mind. Yet Calwell and Putnam diverged in their approach to operating their establishments—Calwell sought to consolidate his holdings, while Putnam envisioned his hotel as one of many in a thriving resort town. Calwell followed an economic model of the springs as a plantation: a single owner with a single product, the springs experience, that he sold on the open market of leisure. The physical layout of his resort—rows of small cottages centered around a large, columned, white main building—reinforced the plantation model. By contrast, Gideon Putnam followed a developmental model of diversified commerce. He planned a small town of hotels and springs lining Broad Street, the 120 foot-wide main avenue of the village Putnam had literally carved from the woods. His wide streets allowed ample room for the passage of carriages and pedestrians, and lots reserved for a meeting house, school, and cemetery contributed to the community’s development (see Map

Both men readily embraced the Market Revolution and its potential for both creating and expanding wealth. Calwell and Putnam benefited from the market personally, in the form of increased profits, and professionally from the greater number of visitors who prospered as a result of the Market Revolution and subsequently had both the means and cultural impetus to visit the springs.

Even so, each proprietor followed a slightly different route to the springs. Calwell began his career by speculating in merchant vessels based in his hometown of Baltimore, with limited success. But his marriage to Polly Bowyer in 1797 brought him into the family that owned White Sulphur Springs. Upon Polly’s father Michael Bowyer’s death in 1808, Calwell suddenly found himself part owner (along with Polly’s six siblings) of a promising springs resort. From his base in Baltimore Calwell embraced his new opportunity, gradually buying up the estate of Michael Bowyer and purchasing the portions held by his wife’s siblings. He also exerted his

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16 James Scott, “A Map of a number of building Lots and Buildings near the Congress Spring the property of Gideon Putnam as the same was surveyed in June 1808”; Scott, “A Map of a number of Building Lots & Buildings near the Congress Spring in the County of Saratoga. Being the property of Gideon Putnam as the same was Surveyed in April 1810,” Putnam Collection, New York State Historical Association [NYSHA].


18 Michael Bowyer owned a 950-acre parcel in Greenbrier County, 600 of which he divided equally between his three daughters: Polly Calwell, Fanny Bedford, and Elizabeth Copeland (1783, 1804, 1809 Land Books, Greenbrier County Courthouse, Lewisburg, West Virginia [GCC], from notes in Greenbrier Archives, White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia [GBA]).

19 Bowyer’s estate divided his remaining 350-acre land holdings equally between James Bowyer, John Bowyer, Elizabeth Bowyer, William Bowyer, James and Mary (Polly Bowyer) Calwell, and William and Frances (Bower) Bedford (1810 Land Book). Two hundred acres “to include Sulphur Spring, all the houses barns and stables adjacent together with the grist mill and saw mill,” were to be held in common by the heirs (Record Book 4, page 376, May 30, 1810, GCC, from notes in GBA).

20 James Calwell purchased the majority of hotel-related items, including linens, books, tables, blankets, mattresses, cots, wagons, animals (horses, oxen, cattle, sheep, hogs), and one male
influence on the operation of the springs by urging that a manager be hired to oversee the springs and that new buildings be added. During the War of 1812, Calwell suffered a series of unrelated business failures, which induced him to become more involved in his only successful investment, White Sulphur Springs. After a fairly successful 1815 season, the summer of 1816 brought more guests and an overcrowded hotel, which boosted Calwell’s hopes that the White would “take the head of all the springs say double the number of any other.” The end of the War of 1812 increased American economic surpluses and cultural confidence; now the elite possessed both the money to visit the springs and the desire to patronize a distinctly American resort. The next year, based on his early financial successes and with capital reserves no longer devoted to the war effort, Calwell convinced eight Baltimore merchants to sign notes for a $20,000 loan, which he used to finance the buy-out of more of his remaining relatives and to improve the spring. By 1819 Calwell controlled five-sevenths of the Bowyer estate and provided the guiding force behind the growth of the springs. With the 1819 construction of a springhouse as the symbolic center of the resort, crowned with a wooden statue of an Indian maiden atop the building, and his permanent relocation to White Sulphur Springs in 1818, James Calwell resolved that his fortune would come from the mineral waters of western Virginia. His choice of an Indian figure as the symbol of his capitalist venture is interesting: Calwell

21 James Calwell, White Sulphur Springs, to Polly Bowyer Calwell, Baltimore, 25 August 1815, 9 and 23 August 1816, Calwell Letters, GBA.
22 Deed Book 6, p. 449, November 14, 1816: William Bowyer sold his 1/7 interest in undivided land to James Calwell for $7,000; Deed Book 6, p. 518, November 16, 1816: William and Fanny Bedford sold their 1/7 interest to Calwell for $7,000; Deed Book 7, p. 359, September 30, 1818: James and Peggy Bowyer sold their 1/7 interest to James Calwell for $7,000; Deed Book 7, p. 535, September 6, 1819: John and Elizabeth Bowyer sold their 1/7 interest to James Calwell for $5,000. (All records GCC, from notes in GBA.)
projected an image of simplicity, virtue, fecundity, and health through this figure, not the acquisitive nature of the springs. By erecting this statue, Calwell mislead his guests into believing that White Sulphur Springs was not a market-oriented establishment.

Gideon Putnam lacked Calwell’s clever eye for imagery, but shared his business opportunism. After marrying Doanda Risley, Putnam left his birthplace in Connecticut for Middlebury and Rutland, Vermont, where he failed as a farmer. The Putnams then moved to Bemis Heights, New York, the site of the pivotal Battle of Saratoga during the Revolution, but a 1789 flood forced them from the banks of the Hudson River to the inland settlement around the High Rock Spring. It consisted of a few crude log taverns that catered to the springs trade. Gideon Putnam leased 300 acres and began felling trees, from which he produced sheaves and shingles that he floated down the Hudson to New York City. From the profits of their sale, Putnam built a mill and purchased his 300 clear-cut acres, amassing enough capital to construct a two-story tavern near the Congress Spring in 1802. By 1805 his tavern profits allowed him to purchase an additional 130 acres and lay out what would become the village of Saratoga Springs.24

Town lots sold rapidly in 1811 and 1812, and Putnam’s venture seemed to be thriving.25 He excavated three new springs and channeled their flow through wooden tubes during the first decade of the new century. By christening them the Washington, Columbian, and Hamilton Spring, as well as naming his streets Congress, Federal, Saratoga, and Bath, he invoked the patriotic symbolism of those names. The Federalist and Anglo-philic nomenclature must have pleased Saratoga’s elite visitors from New England.

24 Stone, Reminiscences of Saratoga, 55-62.
25 Box 1: 1791-1854, Deeds: 1791-1812, Putnam Collection, NYSHA.
and New York. Yet few visitors stayed in Putnam's tavern; they preferred to
lodge at nearby Ballston's fashionable hotels and ride to Saratoga for a drink
of the Congress Spring waters and perhaps a quick meal at Putnam's.26
Business at Ballston was thriving—the 250-room Sans Souci Hotel and a
series of smaller hotels and boarding houses catered to a crowd of tourists.27
By the close of the decade, Ballston had become the premiere resort of
American gentry from both north and south, with Saratoga a weak reflection
of its neighbor.28

But Gideon Putnam dreamed of grander plans for his fledgling town,
seeing promise in the successes of nearby Ballston. In 1811 he began building
Congress Hall on a scale to eclipse the Sans Souci, hoping this new hotel
would attract the fashionable crowds from Ballston and establish Saratoga as
the nation's foremost watering place. He would not see his dreams reach
fruition, as he fell from a scaffold while inspecting the construction and broke
his ribs. The wounds never completely healed and he died of inflamed lungs
in December, 1812. His widow and sons assumed the business and completed
his vision, running the hotel and real estate holdings profitably for several
years thereafter.29

Putnam's personal tragedy was the latest in a string of ill-fated, grandiose
schemes for the two springs entrepreneurs. He was an unsuccessful farmer,
and his Virginia counterpart Calwell had failed at shipping. But both retained
their faith in the market and their ability to strike it rich. They saw in the
springs a chance at business redemption, a final opportunity to turn their

26 Durkee, Reminiscences, 63; Stone, Reminiscences, 64.
27 Grose, Centennial History, 58.
28 Chandos Michael Brown, Benjamin Silliman: A Life in the Young Republic (Princeton, New
29 Stone, Reminiscences, 64.
history of failure into one of success. Like the invalids who gathered at the 
early resorts Calwell and Putnam took over, the proprietors sought a cure for 
their ailments in the waters. Invalids and entrepreneurs used the springs as 
their only remaining option, whether for physical or financial difficulties.

The biggest obstacle facing springs proprietors like Calwell and Putnam 
was their continual struggle to keep their establishments profitable and 
ensure their long-term viability. The mineral springs business, because of its 
seasonal and precarious nature as a tourist economy, was an unstable and 
highly competitive industry. Resorts stayed open for the summer months 
and depended on revenues from a two- to three-month season to sustain the 
enterprise over the lean winter months.30 Seasonal hotels in Saratoga 
Springs needed cash so desperately that several mortgaged their furniture, 
kitchen supplies, and general inventory in attempts to stay afloat. In this cash-
strapped environment, proprietors attempted to extract as much cash as 
possible from their guests. In addition, most visitors stayed only a short time 
at any single establishment, which exacerbated the need to extract as much 
cash from them as quickly as possible.31 In this unstable, seasonal business 
climate, springs proprietors relied on a continued influx of cash and creative

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30 For example, the Hot Springs Tavern in Virginia took in eighty percent of its annual 
revenues during the peak springs season from late June to early October and Rockwell Putnam, 
the son of Gideon Putnam most active in the Saratoga real estate and mineral springs business, 
transacted the vast majority of his bank deposits during the summer months (“Cash Recd at the 
Hot Springs Tavern from the 6th day of February 1816 to the 6th day of February 1817,” Folder 
33, Box 9, Daggs Family Business Records, Library of Virginia [LoV]. Total receipts 6 February 
1816-6 February 1817: $6,000.39; received 25 June-11 October 1816: $4802.33 (80.0%); Over 65 
percent of Rockwell Putnam’s deposits into the “Schenectady Bank” took place between June 
and September, the peak months for springs visits ($6991.71 of $10,630.73, or 65.8%), Folders 
1831-1834, 1835-1839, Box 1, Putnam Collection, NYSHA).
31 Town of Saratoga Springs Chattel Mortgages, 1833-1860, Folders 1-26, Saratoga Springs City 
Historian’s Office [SSCH]; The mean length of stay for springs visitors was 9.5 days (see 
ledgers cited in Table III). Olive Blair Graffam reached similar conclusions in her thesis, “The 
sources of revenue to succeed. Springs proprietors moved toward commercializing their establishments as much through desperation as because of ideological adherence to the market.

Yet even when they enthusiastically embraced market exchanges, springs proprietors fared poorly. Perhaps the largest impediment to operating a springs business was raising the capital necessary to establish a hotel, improve the spring itself, construct a bath house, hire (or purchase) workers, procure supplies, and advertise the new venture. So springs entrepreneurs looked for creative ways to raise capital. The promoters of Hot Springs, Virginia attempted to improve their town by selling lottery tickets that included rights to a piece of land and "free use of all the Baths" in perpetuity. Their optimism faded when only a few individuals purchased lots. But these adventures into the wider world of capital beyond local and familiar sources was the exception.

More typical was the experience of the Calwell family at White Sulphur Springs, which suffered from a chronic shortage of capital and often borrowed from wealthy guests to meet their shortfalls. Colonel Richard Singleton of South Carolina was a favorite creditor, frequent guest, and arbiter of springs society. In 1825, just a few years after James Calwell assumed control of the business, Singleton purchased Calwell's mortgage for White Sulphur Springs to rescue the establishment from debt. Singleton quickly became more than a part-owner of the establishment—he provided its most reliable source of income. When Calwell fell several thousand dollars short of his obligations

in 1827, he asked Singleton for money in almost plaintive terms: "I beg you to believe that nothing but the urgency of the call would again make me approach you at this time." The plea worked temporarily, but eventually debts overwhelmed Calwell and he signed the deed to White Sulphur Springs over to Singleton. But Calwell remained optimistic. In 1831 he hopefully told Singleton of a plan to improve the springs "to what it ought to be," if only Singleton would renegotiate the terms of their initial loan and help with some other debts. Relying on familiarity, the only bargaining point he retained, Calwell wrote Singleton: "I cannot express to you the sensibility felt on the rec’pt of your letter for the kind remembrance of me and I pray you to believe the grateful esteem I shall always feel for so worthy a friend."

Calwell, like William Cooper on the New York frontier, relied on familiarity with his guest-creditors and his own social status (tenuous though it was as a struggling springs proprietor) to secure financing for his failing business. And like Cooper, Calwell fell further into debt and lost the confidence of his creditors. Relying on friendship and Singleton’s love of White Sulphur Springs, as well as his already deep financial commitment, Calwell secured well over $30,000 in additional loans from his friend, and nearly $400,000 in total debt by his death in 1851.34

But White Sulphur Springs continued to run a deficit and eventually looked elsewhere for financial relief, having exhausted the patience and

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34 Perceval Reniers, *The Springs of Virginia: Life, Love, and Death at the Waters, 1775-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 56, 61; Conte, *The History of the Greenbrier*, 13, 43. Relevant financial records are part of the Singleton Family Paper, USC, and the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill [SHC]. See especially the letters for 1825 in Folders 58, 63-64, 66, Series 1.2 [SHC]; Folder 8, 1826-1827, Folder 9, 1827-1828, Folder 10, 1828-1830, Folder 13, 1831-1832, and Folder 14, 1832-1833, Box I, USC. Quotations from James Calwell, White Sulphur Springs, to Richard Singleton, Sweet Springs, 10 September 1827, Folder 8, Box 1, USC; Calwell, White Sulphur Springs, to Singleton, Richmond, 1 October 1831, Folder 13, Box 1, USC; Alan Taylor, *William Cooper’s Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Knopf, 1995).
wallets of its friends. Desperate for money, the owners looked to the market for innovative sources of capital. The Calwells followed the example of other Virginia springs by seeking a corporate charter from the state. The Virginia General Assembly established the right to sell shares of stock in its 1831-1832 session, an opportunity many springs establishments seized eagerly. Proprietors cited “the inadequacy of means” as an impediment to “enlarging the benefits + extending the accommodations” of the springs. Additional capital from stock offerings provided the solution.35 Investors were attracted by the potential of a good return on their investment and the social status that came from owning part of a fashionable institution like a mineral spring. But joint stock companies offered several legal innovations that provided additional allure. Investors liked the ability to pass shares on to their heirs, and springs companies enjoyed not only the legal protections of incorporation, but also provisions that allowed them to pursue delinquent investors and to place restrictions on the amount of dividends payable to investors. Incorporation placed the springs at the forefront of the Market Revolution and in a newly stable financial position, advantages which helped contribute to a boom in mineral springs incorporations in antebellum Virginia. Forty-nine springs companies incorporated in Virginia between 1834 and 1861, with average proposed capital of over $200,000 (See Table I).36 But Virginia placed restrictions on the companies it chartered that hindered the effectiveness of incorporation. Companies had to raise the complete

35 Erasmus Stribling, 16 December 1834 petition to the General Assembly, Augusta County Petitions, LoV.
36 Data from Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia... for various years (published in Richmond after each legislative session), as listed in John W. Williams, compiler, Index to Enrolled Bills of the General Assembly of Virginia, 1776 to 1910 (Richmond: Davis Bottom, 1911). Fifty four corporations are listed, but the five incorporated before 1834 reported no capital figures. In addition, four of the forty nine springs companies incorporated between 1834-1861 listed no capital figures, perhaps because they did not intend to raise any money from public stock offerings.
amount of their proposed capital and sell more than three-fifths of the
proposed shares to more than one shareholder, all in three years’ time, before
the corporation could become legal. Faced with these requirements, several
springs failed in their first attempts at incorporation and tried a second or
third time, often at a reduced level of proposed capital.37 Even White
Sulphur Springs, Virginia’s most popular resort, encountered trouble raising
capital through incorporation. The Calwells proposed incorporation and stock
sales three times over twenty years, but failed each time.38 The most likely
purchasers of the stock, the wealthy Southerners who possessed enough
surplus cash to travel to the springs, had already been tapped dry. Familiarity
had its financial limits.39

Optimistic groups, like the backers of the Virginia springs, saw the
advantages of a more commercial, mixed economy. They continued to
believe that they could raise sufficient capital to build sophisticated resorts. In
an era when Southern private capital was invested in slaves and land, and
most major internal improvements were funded in large part by public

37 Acts...for the Years 1834-1835 (Richmond, 1835), 170-172; Acts...for the Year 1839
(Richmond, 1839), 143; Acts...for the Years 1834-1835, 167-169; Acts...for the Years 1835-1836,
279-180; Acts...for the Years 1839-1840, 114-115; Acts...for the Years 1847-1848, 292; Acts...for
the Year 1833-1834, 227-229; Acts...for the Year 1845, 115-118; Acts...for the Years 1855-1856,
237. Sweet Springs was chartered in 1836 and again in 1856, Tazewell White Sulphur Springs in
1840 and 1842, Fauquier White Sulphur Springs in 1836 and 1854, Hot Springs in 1840, 1848, and
1856, and White Sulphur Springs in 1834, 1845, 1853, and 1854. See discussion of Grayson
Sulphur Springs and Augusta Springs above. Red Sulphur Springs actually increased its
proposed capital between 1837 and 1838.

38 Acts...for the Years 1833-1834, 227; Acts...for the Year 1845, 115; Acts...for the Years 1852-
1853, 292. Each of the White Sulphur Springs laws included a three-year limit on the sale of
all stock except for 1845, which included a two-year limit (118). In an interesting but brief
article, Jane H. Pease argues that the conspicuous consumption of wealthy Southerners,
especially on their trips to spas and Northern resorts, limited the amount of capital available
for investment. The expansion of springs businesses in the antebellum period and the activities
of Richard Singleton suggest that this was not the case (“A Note on Patterns of Conspicuous
Consumption Among Seaboard Planters, 1820-1860,” Journal of Southern History 35 [August
1969]: 381-393).

39 Several leading Virginia families held stock in various springs (Charlene Marie Lewis,
“Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860”[ PhD
diss., University of Virginia, 1997], 142-143).
money, their efforts faced dim prospects. Before the late-1840s to 1850s, most businesses raised capital through lotteries until large merchants and speculators in major port cities accumulated sufficient amounts of liquid capital to finance private ventures.\footnote{George Rogers Taylor, \textit{The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860} (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1951), 32, 49, 88, 99-101, 320-322, 382. Taylor estimates that 55 percent of the capital used to finance Southern railroads before 1860 came from state and local governments, 92.} Springs proprietors found themselves caught in this shortage of capital, a situation that was not restricted to the tourism industry and existed in other sectors of the Southern economy. The South’s reliance on slavery and the subsequent concentration of its already scarce supply of capital in chattel and land created dis-incentives to invest in other forms of property. With scant investments in railroads and industry, unproven and unprofitable leisure-based ventures like mineral springs resorts garnered little of the South’s already limited capital supply. By keeping labor costs high—in the form of slaves that had to be purchased—and preventing large-scale population influxes or intra-regional movement, Southerners stunted local economic development. A staple-crop economy that relied on slavery as its labor source would never create the population growth and economic development seen in the North. Simply put, slavery limited the Southern economy’s growth rate.\footnote{Gavin Wright, \textit{Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War} (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 11, 20-33; Harry L. Watson, “Slavery and Development in a Dual Economy: The South and the Market Revolution,” in Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., \textit{The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions} (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 44-68; Frederick F. Siegal, \textit{The Roots of Southern Distinctiveness: Tobacco and Society in Danville, Virginia, 1780-1865} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 3-5.}

The story was somewhat different at Saratoga Springs, where the more diversified and commercial Northern economy provided ready access to capital. Saratoga’s hotel proprietors avoided the need to incorporate by relying on local investors. They mortgaged their hotels’ furnishings to some of the

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town’s wealthy patrons when they needed to raise additional cash for improvements or meet everyday expenses, often for amounts as small as a few hundred dollars. The merchant capitalists from New York City and Boston who frequented Saratoga Springs created excess capital in their everyday business that Southern planters could not. The growth of nearby cities like Albany and Troy as centers of commerce, manufacturing, and transportation, especially after the completion of the Erie Canal, increased trade across upstate New York, and created additional sources of excess capital on which springs proprietors could draw. These wealthy Northerners invested in Saratoga not simply as a resort, but as a town as well. Saratoga’s economy relied on more than one enterprise; it was a resort town and commercial center composed of numerous businesses. Saratoga was closely tied to the market by commercial design and geographic location, but possessed additional advantages over the Virginia springs. Ironically, Saratoga, the more commercial and market-oriented of the two springs regions, depended less on the market for its capital needs. Because of the development of Saratoga’s local economy, it could call on local merchants and businessmen for capital, while Virginia’s springs were forced to look beyond their local and familiar networks for investors. Saratoga’s more extensive commercialization of leisure actually allowed a greater degree of local control over springs business than at the more isolated, both commercially and geographically, Virginia springs.

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42 See Table II for a complete list of these mortgages. Town of Saratoga Springs Chattel Mortgages, 1833-1860, Folders 1-26, SSCH. Of the 38 mortgages concerning springs-related establishments, twelve involved amounts over $1,000 while 26 were for less than that amount. The exact averages are $1492.45 (aggregate), $4000.80 (over $1,000), and $334.74 (under $1,000).
The springs' involvement in developing a transportation network to connect them with their guests and the rest of the nation highlighted the disparity in market involvement. Both Northern and Southern mineral springs believed in the benefits of improved transportation to advance their business, and both actively promoted turnpikes and railroads. But Saratoga reaped the rewards of an efficient, convenient transportation system quickly, while the Virginia springs continued to founder in a spider-web of turnpikes, rail spurs, and canals until the 1850s. In both Virginia and New York State, mineral springs proprietors stood at the forefront of efforts to improve internal transportation networks, and their resorts became key points on the newly developing turnpikes, river networks, canals, and railroads of early nineteenth-century America. Because their business relied so heavily on the efficient, speedy movement of people and products from urban areas to rural retreats, springs promoters adhered to the “culture of progress” that equated transportation improvement and economic growth with social and moral betterment. In terms of transportation improvements, they eagerly joined the Market Revolution.43

The involvement of springs proprietors in transportation improvements came not from any ideological preference for commercialism, but from their immediate need to ease and facilitate the guests' journeys to the springs. From their earliest pilgrimages, mineral springs visitors in both Virginia and New York faced rudimentary, even difficult traveling conditions. “Very few people visit these springs,” James Kirke Paulding wrote

from Virginia in 1817, “remote and difficult of access as they are.”44 Travelers complained constantly of the poor road conditions, at least one of which was “beyond description for roughness & Steepness—it was nothing but loose stones & rocks without anything having been done to it—indeed the track in Some places was Scarcely discernible.”45 On more than one occasion, stage coaches collapsed, broke a wheel, or snapped an axle. Passengers had so few choices that some resorted to rudimentary conveyances, like the wagon St. George Tucker rode fifteen miles from a crossroads tavern to White Sulphur Springs.46 To save the equipment and horses, drivers frequently asked their passengers to walk up steep hills and down descents, a process that lengthened the journey to the point where crossing the Blue Ridge at Rockfish Gap “took us 3 hours & 1/2 altho the distance is only 7 Miles.”47 Rushing to make up lost time, drivers pushed their customers “by rising early and sitting up late—for instance at 2 in the morning and we were never housed before 9 at night.”48 The wealthy travelers were accustomed to more luxurious accommodations, and attributed their hardship to the “indifference of the proprietors of public conveyances in America as to the safety of their passengers.”49

In addition to the perils of stages, high costs discouraged frivolous travel. One stage company controlled business in the Greenbrier region “and they

48 Mary Thompson, Red Sweet Springs, to Mrs. Frances M. Lewis and Mrs. Mary Neale, Philadelphia [1848], Folder 36, Conway Whittle Family Papers, SWM.
have no opposition & the consequence is very high stage fare and always over
crowded."  

50 Turnpike companies charged carriages, the conveyance of choice for fashionable tourists, three to eight times more than a horse or wagon to travel their road. Seeing a lucrative market, turnpike operators charged exorbitant fares for pleasure travelers and more modest fees for local farm vehicles and individual travelers. Under these prices and conditions few ordinary Americans could afford to travel the great distances to the springs.  

51 Some male travelers chose to avoid the risks, uncertainties, and cost of stage travel, opting instead to ride on horseback, which allowed one to “pick [their] path where a wheel-carriage cannot get along.”  

52 Travel by horseback allowed riders to take shortcuts over mountains and through wild regions on bridle paths that saved, in the case of James Kirke Paulding, “nearly forty miles.”  

53 The danger of robbery or attack by wild animals increased the sense of romance and adventure implicit in solitary travel on back roads. In response, many gentlemen carried pistols for self-protection.  

54 A travel writer and cultural commentator like Paulding found the roughness of Southern roads charming. Always looking for a humorous tale or nugget of authentic American culture, he possessed the ironic self detachment to find Virginia’s elementary road system quaint. Springs proprietors watching their bottom line and hurried travelers did not share his sense of appreciation.

50 F. Stone, White Sulphur Springs, to Thomas D. Stone, Charles County, Maryland, 25 August 1857, GBA.  
51 Warm Springs and Harrisonburg Turnpike Toll Collection Book, 1838-1853, LoV. Cattle and hogs drovers were levied 62 cents per 100 head.  
53 Paulding, Letters from the South, I: 227.  
The slow pace of travel on rudimentary roads presented one of the most serious obstacles to the growth of the Virginia springs. Even by 1848, when a fairly extensive road network linked the Virginia springs to each other and eastern points, travel from the tidewater took four grueling eighteen-hour days of travel. Many northerners, even farther away, reached the same conclusion about the route to the Virginia springs as Mary Thompson: "I think that I am not going there, to be jolted half to death in a stage coach by the way."55 The difficulty of travel to the springs was not due to a lack of effort on the part of Virginia's residents and springs promoters. In fact, they firmly believed in the benefits of an efficient transportation system and made numerous attempts to improve the way. As early as 1768, George Washington and other leading Virginians proposed a road over the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Hot and Warm Springs, an effort that the citizens of Bath County renewed years later. In addition to improving commerce and communication with the state capital at Richmond, such a road would "facilitate the anxieties of the unhealthy and miserable on the south Side of James's River, in their Attempts to visit our Waters." Connected with the main road to the south, the new route would facilitate travel from Tennessee, the Carolinas, and Georgia, thus increasing business at the springs.56 Boosters claimed that "a large portion of the visitors to the Springs from the lower country," an

55 Mary Thompson, Red Sweet Springs, to Mrs. Frances M. Lewis and Mrs. Mary Neale, Philadelphia [1848], Folder 36, Conway Whittle Family Papers, SWM.
56 Virginia Gazette, 21 July 1768, p. 34; S.W. Valenza Jr. and Ron Shelley, "George Washington's Mountain Road Lottery: An Expressway to a Casino Spa in the Virginia Mountains," Lottery Player's Magazine 9:3 (March 1989), 1, 12; 9:4 (April 1989): 1, 12, 28; Bath County Petitions, 9 and 21 December 1811, LoV. Additional petitions concerned the extension of the Warm Springs Turnpike (7 December 1827), construction of a turnpike for Warm to Hot Springs (17 December 1828), a turnpike from the springs to Lexington in Rockbridge County (16 January 1832), completion of the Augusta to Warm Springs road (10 February 1837), and the construction of a road from Harrisonburg to Augusta Springs (18 December 1817, Augusta County Petitions).
important springs constituency, "will prefer this route." Even guidebook authors like William Burke joined the chorus in singing the praises of constructing turnpikes to improve access to his establishment to the west and "give visitors a complete circle of travel to all the great Springs of Western Virginia."  

It was not guidebook authors or newspaper editors, but the citizens of springs towns, who led the effort to build roads to the springs of mountainous western Virginia and expand the springs business. Of the 653 turnpike, road, and plank road companies incorporated by the Virginia General Assembly between 1776 and 1861, some 44 (6.7 percent) began or terminated their routes in spring towns. For many of these towns, economic well-being was tied to the springs business. Realizing this and sensing the economic possibility of springs trade, the state government assigned engineers to assist road builders and subscribed to as much as three-fifths of turnpike company stock. Besides the state, the most important investors came from the leading local families and springs companies. Business leaders like James Calwell, the entrepreneurial proprietor of White Sulphur Springs, saw the benefits to his business and contributed to the development of a road network by allowing the James River and Kanawha Road Company an easement through his property in 1821. By 1824 the road stretched from Richmond to the White Sulphur Springs, and in 1827 travelers could ride a stagecoach from the front of Calwell's hotel to Guyandotte on the Ohio River.

59 Data taken from Williams, Index to Enrolled Bills (includes all companies with the name of known or proposed mineral spring in their title); Lana Martindale, "Highways to Health and Pleasure: The Antebellum Turnpikes and Trade of the Mineral Springs in Greenbrier and Monroe Counties, Virginia," unpublished paper, 1994, pp. 13-19, VHS; Carson, "Early American Tourists and the Commercialization of Leisure," 395.
where steamboats from as far south as New Orleans landed. With the completion of this road, the Virginia springs were accessible to two key constituencies—established planters of the southern tidewater and newly wealthy cotton planter from the booming Mississippi Delta and old southwest. By helping build a road to the west, the springs expanded their clientele and their attachment to the market economy. As cotton prices soared, so too did the springs region of western Virginia. Sixty springs roads companies were incorporated from 1829 to 1861, mostly in the cotton boom years of the early 1830s, late 1840s to mid-1850s, and the three years before the outbreak of the Civil War. It is interesting to note that Henry Clay, whose American System included internal improvements as a means of economic development, traveled these roads on his trips between his home in Kentucky and the national capital, stopping at the springs for an extended visit each summer. The Virginia springs' proprietors and promoters were eager to reap the benefits of Clay's internal improvements, and helped build the roads to bring it to fruition.

Despite these efforts at road building, the Virginia springs remained difficult to reach. Steamboat travel on the Mississippi and Ohio shortened the distance between the delta and the springs, but still occupied more than a

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In addition, eight companies were chartered before 1829, but none during the panic of 1819-1820. Barbara Carson agrees that the springs fared as did the economy, but identifies only the 1819 panic as significant ("Early American Tourists and the Commercialization of Leisure," 397).
week. Railroads reached only as far as Gordonsville, twenty miles east of
Charlottesville in the piedmont, and Winchester at the upper end of the
Shenandoah Valley. By 1840 the James River and Kanawha Canal wound 146
miles from Richmond to Lynchburg at the base of the Blue Ridge, but travel
on this route proceeded at a rate similar to stagecoach travel—four to six day
to the springs.62 When the canal stopped at Lynchburg, so too did the
advantages of smoother, more relaxed travel on packet boats. The canal
fulfilled the James River portion of its name, but never crossed Virginia’s
mountains to reach the Kanawha River to complete its title and tap the
growing market of travelers from the southwest. That it never turned a profit
speaks to the minor role of canals in springs transportation.63 Indeed, of the
thirty-four canal companies chartered by Virginia, none related to the
springs.64 Located in mountainous terrain with only a few swift, narrow
rivers, canals never penetrated the springs region. Besides geographical and
technological limitations, canals in Virginia suffered from lack of capital.
They were more capital-intensive than roads, where the South’s scarce capital
went in search of quick profits.

With the exception of a few additional roads and the improvement of
existing thoroughfares, the routes to the Virginia springs remained
unchanged until the 1850s. During that decade, the transportation innovation
of the century, railroads, dramatically improved accessibility to the springs.
Like turnpikes, they enjoyed a significant amount of state support and

62 John Rossen, White Sulphur Springs, to Clara, Camden, South Carolina, 1 August 1849, GBA;
Philip St. George Cocke diary, 1853, Box 1, Cocks Family Papers, Elliot-Cocke Collection,
Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia [UVa]. One stage line ran from
Lynchburg to Lexington three days per week, leaving at 5 a.m. and arriving at 9 p.m. On the
second day stages left Lexington at 4 a.m. and arrived at White Sulphur Springs later that day
(Lexington Gazette, 1 September 1857, p. 3, col. 4).
63 Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 42.
64 Williams, Index to Enrolled Bills.
assistance. Virginia's 1850s railroad boom was due in part to state economic assistance, but flush times, a growing springs region, and the desire to link the South as sectional tension increased, allowed Southern track miles to triple during the decade. Railroads in western Virginia gradually crossed the Blue Ridge, ran down the Shenandoah Valley, and traversed the Allegheny Mountains. But it was not until 1857 that a railroad penetrated the mineral springs region. Disappointingly, the Virginia Central stopped twenty miles short of White Sulphur Springs, leaving only a dotted line signifying a railroad "in progress" on guidebook maps (See Map 2).

Railroads never reached the long-established Virginia springs in the years before the Civil War, but the expanding network of rails in the eastern portion of the state and along the southern and northern portions of the Valley of Virginia both improved travel from distant points to the springs and presented new opportunities that springs proprietors quickly manipulated to their advantage. New springs appeared along the railroad lines and attracted a clientele that ventured no farther than a few miles from the end of a railway line. While some of these springs attracted visitors many years before the arrival of the railroads, only the proximity of a railroad literally put them on the map. Some springs companies, like the Yellow


66 Map attached to Moorman,*The Virginia Springs: Comprising an Account of all the Principal Mineral Springs of Virginia, with Remarks on the Nature and Medical Application of Each* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph, 1857). This edition was reprinted in 1858 and 1859 with slight changes to the maps. Many other parts of Virginia never succeeded in their internal improvement schemes (see Siegal, *The Roots of Southern Distinctiveness*, 49-58).

67 Although Virginia incorporated three springs-related railroads (of 119 chartered railroad companies), neither the Montgomery White Sulphur Springs (1855-1856), Rockbridge Alum Springs (1859-1860), nor the Burning Springs and Oil Line (1861) Railroads appeared on any subsequent guidebook maps (Williams, *Index of Enrolled Bills*; maps in Moorman, *The Virginia Springs* [1857, 1859]).
Sulphur Springs, incorporated at nearly the same time as the railroads reached their soon-to-be-constructed front doors.68

These newly-formed springs companies owed their prosperity to the ease of transportation provided by railroads, a point the springs proprietors used to their advantage. Their broadside advertisements touted proximity to railroads in the opening lines. Located only one and one-quarter miles from the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad, the Montgomery White Sulphur Springs claimed to be “the Most Accessible in the State, if not the Whole South.” Travelers leaving Richmond in the morning reached the hotel’s railroad depot by five o’clock that same afternoon and rode “the SPRINGS COMPANY’S CARS” to the hotel porch. Instead of spending days jouncing along mountain roads in stuffy carriages, visitors to the Montgomery Springs passed a pleasant day traveling and by evening found themselves “enjoying all the pleasures and advantages of a watering place.”69 One particular spring owed much of its success to its convenient steamboat, stagecoach, and railroad connections, which placed Fauquier White Sulphur Springs within a day’s travel of Washington as early as the late 1840s. It was a foundering business teetering on the brink of bankruptcy and dissolution in the 1830s, but the arrival of a railroad stop nearby transformed Fauquier White Sulphur Springs from one of a host of marginal local springs into one of Virginia’s most popular and profitable resorts. By easing travel and linking the springs

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68 Yellow Sulphur Springs was incorporated on 8 March 1856 (Acts...for the Years 1855-1856, 235); the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad reached the area by 1853.
69 Montgomery White Sulphur Springs Broadside, 1856. Montgomery County Papers, Virginia County Collection, SWM. Bedford Alum Springs also offered stage service from the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad to the springs, four miles distant (The Bedford Alum Springs, 5). Other springs made similar claims. See “The Kimberling Springs,” 1859 Broadside, UVa; “Strother’s Hotel, Berkeley Springs, Virginia,” 1854 Broadside, UVa; “Fauquier White Sulphur Springs...” 185[?] Broadside, SWM.
region to distant markets, railroads both improved business and fostered the
growth of Southern capitalism.\textsuperscript{70}

While the lack of an efficient transportation network delayed the
expansion of the Virginia springs beyond a few elite resorts until the 1850s,
Saratoga Springs' excellent location near the head of navigation on the
Hudson River and its proximity to some of America's earliest canals and
railroads spurred Saratoga's growth into the largest American mineral water
resort. Still, as in Virginia, early travelers complained of the rough roads and
bone-rattling stagecoach rides. Abigail May described a particularly difficult
trip as she bounced along the rutted stage roads of Massachusetts, crossed the
Connecticut River, traversed the Berkshire Mountains, ferried the Hudson
River, and rode over the sandy flats north of Albany during her five-day
stagecoach journey of nearly two hundred miles to Ballston Spa in the
summer of 1800.\textsuperscript{71} But complaints like hers quickly vanished as Saratoga
integrated itself into the highly efficient transportation network of upstate
New York. Unlike May, most travelers took a different route by sailing up the
Hudson River and resorting to stage travel for only the last thirty-seven miles
from Albany to Saratoga. Transportation improvements soon eased both
sections of this journey. Saratoga's proprietors shared an enthusiasm for
internal improvements and market involvement with their Virginia
counterparts, but enjoyed greater success achieving their goals and realizing
the benefits.

With little involvement from springs boosters, the development of
steamboats on the Hudson River revolutionized travel to the springs. Once

\textsuperscript{71} Abigail May diary, 24 May 1800, NYSHA.
Robert Fulton demonstrated the commercial feasibility of Hudson River steamboat travel in 1807, a journey that had once taken several days, depending on weather conditions and tides, now lasted overnight. Although business proved slow at first, the return of prosperity after the War of 1812 made Fulton's company so successful that others soon challenged his domination of steamboat travel in New York State, a right he and his partner, Robert R. Livingston, enjoyed until their monopoly's repeal in 1825.72 Once the state removed restrictions on competition, various companies offered steamboat travel on the Hudson River.73 By 1838 three companies with nine boats combined plied the New York-Albany route, leaving New York twice daily, arriving in Albany ten hours later, a great improvement over earlier modes of transportation.74

The transportation revolution that swept up the Hudson River was due in large part to geographic advantages of the Hudson, which was navigable by ocean-going ships to Albany, and the commercial economy that powered the region, reliant as it had been since colonial times on trade and the rapid shipment of goods. This process continued its expansion with the construction of the Erie Canal up the Mohawk River valley west of Albany in the 1810s and 1820s, but the canal had little direct impact on the springs. It created a climate of transportation innovation and improvement, but carried

72 Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 57-59; Roger Haydon, ed., Upstate Travels: British Views of Nineteenth-Century America (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 11. The 1824 U.S. Supreme Court decision Gibbons v. Ogden, which held that the Federal government possessed the power to regulate interstate commerce, facilitated the breakup of the Livingston-Fulton steamboat monopoly within New York.
73 The Northern Traveller; Containing the Routes to Niagara, Quebec, and the Springs; with Descriptions of the Principal Scenes, and Useful Hints to Strangers. With Maps and Copperplates (New York: Wilder & Campbell, 1825), 6.
74 The Tourist, or Pocket Manual for Travellers on the Hudson River, the Western and Northern Canals and Railroads; the Stage Routes to Niagara Falls; and Down Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence to Montreal and Quebec. Comprising also the Routes to Lebanon, Ballston, and Saratoga Springs, with Many New and Interesting Details (New York: Harper & Brothers, 6th ed., 1838), 95; Haydon, Upstate Travels, 20.
few people destined for Saratoga. Twenty-seven locks in twenty-eight and one-half miles slowed canal boats to a crawling pace of twelve to fourteen hours for the journey from Albany to Schenectady, a distance of fifteen miles that took only two to three hours by stagecoach on excellent turnpike roads.\footnote{The Tourist, 43.} Although they welcomed the improved commerce and communication with the West that came with the canal, Saratoga’s leaders knew that it provided little help to the majority of their visitors. Saratoga’s major problem remained getting people from the steamboat docks in Albany or Troy to the springs themselves.

Most travelers attempted to secure a stagecoach in Albany or Troy to take them to the springs, which constituted a difficult task in the early years of springs tourism. The establishment of a regular mail stage in the 1810s improved travel to a certain degree. Travelers praised the service for its convenient seats and excellent horses, but it only ran three days per week, an insufficient schedule to serve the growing springs.\footnote{Gideon Minor Davison, The Fashionable Tour: Or, A Trip to the Springs, Niagara, Quebeck, and Boston, in the Summer of 1821 (Saratoga Springs: G.M. Davison, 1822, 28); Northern Traveler, 205; Elihu Hoyt, “Journal of a Tour to Saratoga Springs, August 1827,” Traveler’s Accounts, 1826-1830 folder, SSCH.} Even though the journey took only half a day, this comparatively rapid pace failed to satisfy many travelers and springs promoters: they wanted to do for overland travel what the steamboat had accomplished for river travel—shorten time and space by the application of steam.\footnote{Carson, “Early American Tourists and the Commercialization of Leisure,” 386.}

Just as the Hudson River region served as the laboratory for early steamship navigation, so too did the route from Albany to the springs witness some of America’s earliest efforts at railroading. Shortly after the 1825 construction of the world’s first railroad in England, Americans began
experimenting with this new technology. Several small tramways carried mining products to nearby rivers, and the first important commercial railroad, the Baltimore & Ohio, began laying track in 1828. Plans for a railroad between Albany and Saratoga soon followed. Promoters hoped to connect the springs to the Mohawk & Hudson Railroad, which promoters claimed would reach from Albany to Schenectady and avoid the plethora of Erie Canal locks along the route. To complete the rail connection to the springs, the Schenectady & Saratoga line carried its first passengers on July 12, 1832 and reached Saratoga in 1833, making it the second railroad in New York State after the Mohawk & Hudson. Public enthusiasm for the railroads convinced investors that a second, rival line running from Troy to Saratoga could compete with the Schenectady & Saratoga. The Rensselaer & Saratoga Railroad soon began building its tracks six miles up the Hudson from Albany. The benefits of this new transportation mode appeared immediately. A ride that formerly took an entire day now lasted only two hours. The completion of the Hudson River Railroad between Troy and New York City in 1851 only shortened the trip. A traveler could complete the entire journey from New York—America’s largest city, transportation hub, and gateway for Southern tourists—to the springs entirely by rail.

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78 Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 75-77.
79 Durkee, Reminiscences, 7-8, 89-90, 173; Grose, Centennial History, 112; Stone, Reminiscences, 180-181; Benedict diary, 1831-1832 entries, SSCH (Benedict served as the ticket agent and station master of the Saratoga and Schenectady Railroad). Haydon states that towns rushed to get canal or railroad connections, hoping for an economic boom (Upstate Travels, 11).
80 The Schenectady & Saratoga left Albany at 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. daily except Sundays, with 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. departures from Saratoga, while the Rensselaer & Saratoga left Troy at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., and Saratoga at 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. (The Tourist [1838], 103-104). The Saratoga Whig listed two runs daily at slightly different times in a series of railroad advertisements during the summers of 1840-1841 (see, for example, 10 August 1841, p. 1, col. 2).
81 S. DeVeaux, The Travelers’ Own Book, to Saratoga Springs, Niagara Falls and Canada (Buffalo: Faxon & Read, 1841), 16; Durkee, Reminiscences, 13.
Travelers enjoyed the shorter and easier trip, but springs proprietors reaped greater benefits. During the Schenectady & Saratoga Railroad’s first summer of service to Saratoga, 1833, it carried over 2,100 passengers during May, and as many as 4,100 during one week in August. Only a little over one thousand tourists had visited the springs in the 1820s, before the railroads eased travel. By the 1840 and 1841 seasons over 13,000 tourists arrived at Saratoga, the vast majority by rail (Table IV). From the perspective of a hotel owner trying to fill his rooms, the railroad was an unmitigated success.

But the concept of rail travel served more than a commercial purpose. Simply riding the railroad became an amusing part of a trip to the springs and a cultural experience that marked one as a sophisticated traveler. Passengers joined springs proprietors in praising the benefits of the commercialization of leisure, expressing “unbounded” astonishment at the rapid rate of travel. In the words of Gideon Davison, a Saratoga publisher and promoter, a rail trip to the springs now constitutes one of the greatest sources of novelty and pleasure in a visit to those celebrated fountains of health. Free from all care or apprehension of danger, the traveler glides through a country diversified with much interesting scenery, encountering in his course, from the rapidity of the motion, a current of air sufficient to render even a summer’s sun agreeable, and finds himself at the far-famed Saratoga, ere he is aware that it is possible he can have overcome the distance in so short a space of time.

82 Benedict diary, 3 June and 13 August 1833, SSCH.
83 Data from tables of “Arrivals at the Springs” published during July and August in the Saratoga Whig. See, for example, 1 August 1840, p. 3, col. 1.
84 J.E. Snow, Saratoga Springs, to “Bro and Sist Snow,” 7 August 1851, Traveler’s Accounts, 1826-1830, Saratoga Room, Saratoga Springs Public Library [SSPL]; Gideon M. Davison, The
Davison put the best possible gloss on the physical and psychological pleasures of the railroad to encourage people to visit his town. But there was more than mere boosterism at work here; people seemed genuinely to enjoy railroading. When railroad companies erected milestones along the tracks, “so one can look at a watch and calculate exactly” their rate of travel, they encouraged people’s sense of amazement at the technological advances of rail travel. Passengers responded positively—one woman dutifully recorded the pace of her train in her diary.85 Riding the train offered more than convenience; it was novel, fashionable, and a status symbol. To complete the train-riding experience, many springs visitors went to the springs by one direction and returned along the other track, “thus changing the scenery” and increasing their enjoyment.86 Passengers’ enthusiasm for the innovation of rail travel squared with that of springs proprietors. Each believed in and benefited from the culture of progress.

Like their Virginia counterparts, Saratoga’s entrepreneurs saw transportation improvements as part of a larger project to develop their business. Saratoga belonged to a broader tourist circuit that traveled up the Hudson River to the springs, west along the Erie Canal to Niagara Falls, up the St. Lawrence to the historic and quaintly foreign cities of Montréal and Québec, and either down Lake Champlain to the springs or east to New Hampshire’s White Mountains and the New England coast. Leading businessmen in Saratoga invested not just in their own town, but in the

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85 "Dear Mother," Albany, August 22, 1833, NYSHA.
86 O.L. Holley, ed., The Picturesque Tourist; Being a Guide Through the Northern and Eastern States and Canada: Giving an Accurate Description of Cities and Villages, Celebrated Places of Resort, Etc. With Maps and Illustrations (New York: J. Disturnell, 1844), 89. Although the Rensselaer & Saratoga Railroad carried many passengers, it lost money and the Albany route dominated the Saratoga trade (Haydon, *Upstate Travels*, 56).
regional tourist economy as well. Their efforts to construct a rail link with Lake George as part of the Canadian portion of the Northern Tour benefited hotels in that region, but also served their resort. While Virginia’s springs boosters hoped to develop individual destination resorts, linked to major cities by improved roads and rail lines but not necessarily to each other, Saratoga’s promoters envisioned a fast and efficient tourist circuit with multiple stops.87 It was a difference in practice, but not philosophy. Springs promoters in both regions believed in the potential of transportation improvements and market involvement to strengthen their businesses.

Despite the enthusiasm of springs proprietors for transportation improvements, their businesses needed more than turnpikes and railroads to survive. Seasonal incomes and narrow profit margins forced springs proprietors to search for innovative sources of income. Some older springs secured and maintained a distinction that enabled them to remain profitable, at least temporarily—a county seat. Warm Springs and Sweet Springs, Virginia, as well as Ballston Spa, New York, Saratoga’s nearby rival until the 1820s, counted on the reliable business of county courts and offices to maintain the towns when visitors failed to fill the eponymous mineral springs hotels.88 Early town formation relied on the springs and county court businesses to thrive, but at some point towns chose either to remain dominated by a single industry (the springs) or to diversify into a more

87 Benedict diary, 15 June 1835, SSCH; Saratoga and Washington Rail-Road Company Papers, 1847-1849, NYSLA (The railroad’s board included such prominent Saratoga figures as the publisher Gideon Davison, Washington Putnam, and the hotel proprietors Thomas and James Marvin); Brown, Inventing New England, 15-40.

88 Warm Springs became the seat of Bath County, Virginia upon its formation from Augusta, Botetourt, and Greenbrier Counties in 1791 (McAllister, A Brief History of Bath County, 5; McAllister, Historical Sketches of Virginia Hot Springs, 27). Ballston Spa was the chief town and seat of Saratoga County upon its formation from Albany County in 1791 (Sylvester, History of Saratoga County, 12).
general commercial and manufacturing center. Warm Springs chose the former path, while Ballston Spa, forced in part by the drying up of its springs in the 1820s, prospered as the governmental, manufacturing, and mercantile center of Saratoga County.89

But the majority of mineral springs could not draw on the business of county government and looked for other sources of revenue. Once again, they sought to commercialize their business and enter the market to strengthen the springs business. Bottling the springs' waters and shipping them across the nation for home consumption proved to be one of their most lucrative revenue producers. Saratoga's Congress Spring waters were bottled as early as 1810, and by 1811 town father Gideon Putnam saw the profit potential in bottling the water. He issued a set of rules stipulating that "Every person putting up or bottling water, at said Spring for Transportation who shall not render an account + pay for the same 12 1/2 cents a dozen will subject himself to immediate prosecution."90 By asserting his rights as the owner of Congress Spring to control its sale, Putnam ensured that profits from the waters were to be his alone. He was not afraid to commercialize the most basic product of the springs. Putnam's sons leased the bottling rights after their father's death, but the effort to commodify Congress Spring water had succeeded to the point where it had become "an extensive article of commerce, and wagons are daily leaving here with loads of it for the most

89 Grose, Centennial History, 113; On the formation and growth of springs towns, see Christopher Edwin Hendricks, "Town Development in the Colonial Backcountry—Virginia and North Carolina" (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1991), 277-289. For a study of town formation in New York State, see Taylor, William Cooper's Town.
90 Donald Tucker, Collector's Guide to the Saratoga Type Mineral Water Bottle (North Berwick, Maine: Donald & Lois Tucker, 1986), 1; Gideon Putnam, "Rules and Regulations for the observance of those who may resort to Congress Spring," Folder, "Rules and Regulations, 1811," Box 1, Putnam Collection, NYSHA.
remote parts of the country.

The reality of this claim, published in a friendly local newspaper, is doubtful, but the business goal it represented was accurate. Congress Spring became a luxury item in northeastern urban markets, the same clientele that dominated the springs. When Dr. John Clarke, a prominent New York City businessman who had operated a soda fountain in that city since 1819, purchased the rights to bottle Congress Spring water in 1823, he merely completed the vertical integration of his mineral water business. Clarke and his partner, Thomas Lynch, now controlled the production, distribution, and sale of Congress Spring water. They ensured their success by bottling water only between early November and June, when the crowd of tourists diminished enough to allow bottling without depleting the spring’s flow during the all-important fashionable season. Sealed by a cork and wire enclosure and packed in straw-filled crates, the bottles were shipped by wagon and boat to lucrative urban markets like New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia. The partners’ efforts at commercializing spring water proved so successful that by 1856 one Saratoga booster could claim that “there is scarcely a town in the United States of magnitude that is not supplied with it, nor a vessel destined to any distant port that does not enumerate the Congress water in the list of her sea stores or her freight.”

His claim held true only if “every town in America” consisted of the wealthy neighborhoods of America’s northeastern cities and the vessels were the ships that carried

91 “Letter of a Virginian,” Albany Statesman, September 6, 1820, History-Before 1830 folder, SSPL.
92 Durkee, Reminiscences, 5; Stone, Reminiscences, 293.
fashionable tourists. Even so, Clarke and Lynch had created an image and
distribution system that made it seem like everyone, or at least anyone who
merited mention in exclusive social circles, drank Congress water. Clarke and
Lynch knew how to protect, promote, and retail a valuable product.

Their efforts accomplished two conditions crucial to the springs business:
first, by ensuring a steady stream of water during the summer months they
secured Saratoga’s most valuable commodity—its water—for the
consumption of tourists, who would long for the refreshing, health-giving
liquid upon their return home; and second, they bottled the waters so visitors
could enjoy the benefits of Saratoga during the winter months when duties
drew them home and life at the springs was less pleasant and far less sociable.
Clarke and Lynch extended the springs business from a few months to a year-
round enterprise, from a place to a product. In one writer’s estimation, “the
bottling and exportation of these waters has become a trade of no mean
amount, affording employment to a large number of persons, and a
handsome revenue to those engaged.” Apparently this evaluation of the
business was accurate, as the firm of Clarke and Lynch continued selling
water until the Civil War, making handsome profits of as much as $20,000
per year.94 The company guaranteed the exclusivity of its product and it
profitability by restricting the sale of Congress water and by shipping it only in
bottles, not barrels. That way, Saratoga Springs could claim to be the only
resort to offer the vaunted Saratoga waters on tap, a boast that competitors
like Niagara Falls, Long Branch, Nahant, the White Mountains, or the
Catskill Mountain House could not equal.

94 Peck’s Tourist Companion to Niagara Falls, Saratoga Springs, the Lakes, Canada, Etc.
Clarke soon realized that bottling water was more profitable than recreating it. He and other soda fountain entrepreneurs, like Yale College chemist Benjamin Silliman, had operated soda water fountains in major cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore since the first decade of the new century. But few customers favored the iron-tinged flavor of artificially recreated mineral water, much to Silliman’s financial distress. The chemical composition, flavor, and carbonation of Saratoga’s waters somehow worked better at the springs, at least until Clarke and Lynch came along. They perfected the bottling of Saratoga water and capitalized on its fashionable appeal. Others followed, as at least two other springs in Saratoga began bottling and selling their waters and local entrepreneurs attempted to profit from the bottled water business by “purchasing Congress water in bottles at the spring and peddling it about the country.” Bottled Saratoga water quickly replaced the artificial variety. In an age of temperance and health reform, the bottlers had discovered an ideal product. Its natural carbonation provided refreshment and its tonic effects invigorated the digestive system, both without the debilitative effects of alcohol. Drinking the waters separated refined, sober members of the elite from the drunken riff-raff of Jacksonian society.

While Virginia’s mineral spring owners were not as prolific in their shipments of mineral water, they also recognized the commercial potential in selling their water to distant markets. Resorts like Red Sulphur Springs anticipated the bottling and shipping of its waters “to any part of the Union”

in bottles "carefully sealed with wax, at the moment of being filled from the Spring," a claim that they never fulfilled.96 Once again White Sulphur Springs set the standard, bottling its water to the "universal satisfaction" of its customers in 1839. Claims of high demand and rapid sales came in the same pamphlet that announced the introduction of bottled White Sulphur water, making the boast of "universal satisfaction" sound like the blatant boosterism of an unestablished product. But the Calwells did more than make idle boasts to advance water sales. They regularized distribution and prices by appointing official agents in nine cities "who will keep the water constantly on hand, for the supply of the public generally, and for all DEALERS who may wish to purchase the water to sell again." Reliance on the agents listed in the pamphlet assured buyers of "getting the genuine White Sulphur Water," and not any of its many imitators.97 Like John Clarke in Saratoga, James Calwell at White Sulphur Springs sought to control every aspect of his bottled water business to ensure its success. He also knew something about commodifying mineral water.

By bottling their mineral waters and selling them in urban centers, Calwell both expanded his market beyond the seasonal onslaught of wealthy planters and reduced the need for people to visit the springs during the winter months. In the process he developed what modern marketers call brand identity. If consumers drank White Sulphur water in January, they preferred to attend White Sulphur Springs and drink that same water, only

96 Mark Pencil [Mary Hagner], The White Sulphur Papers, or Life at the Springs of Western Virginia (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839), 159. Hagner was a Washington gossip columnist who wrote several novels, in addition to her newspaper reports, on society at the Virginia springs.

97 Agents were located in Richmond, Baltimore, Washington City, Philadelphia, New York City, Albany, Boston, Petersburg (two agents), and Louisville (John D. Moorman, Water From the White Sulphur Springs, Greenbrier County, Virginia. With Practical Remarks on its Medical Properties, and Applicability to Particular Diseases [1840 pamphlet], 1-2, original emphasis).
fresher, in July. A bottle of White Sulphur water connoted the luxury, ease, and good health that people enjoyed while visiting the springs—an image people readily consumed. Its northern competitor, Congress Spring Water, carried the process of brand identification further by literally branding all bottle corks with the company logo.98 The springs alleviated their problem of unsteady revenues by promoting the year-round consumption of their product. During the 1860 season White Sulphur Springs grossed over $7,200 from its bottled water sales, five percent of gross income.99 When the White Sulphur Springs, Virginia’s largest and most popular resort, capitalized on its name and began bottling its waters to raise revenues and attract even more guests, its competitors were forced either to commence their own bottling efforts or find an alternative way of maintaining their business.

Many smaller resorts also advertised their water for sale by merchants in Virginia’s major and regional cities, or by local apothecaries.100 Smaller, newly established resorts like Rockbridge Alum Springs could gross over $9,000 in sales, 75 percent of which was pure profit.101 This portion of the business seemed significant and important enough for the itinerant sketch artist and essayist Porte Crayon to comment that the export of barrels and

98 “Congress Water,” advertisement in Steele, An Analysis of the Congress Spring, facing p. 34.
99 Statement of Receipts and Expenditures for the White Sulphur Springs Hotel for the Season of 1860, Box 3, Philip St. George Cocke Papers, UVa. Mineral water sales totaled $7,212.54 ($268.46 cash sales, $6944.08 on credit) of $144,625.60 in receipts, or 5.0 percent. This ranked mineral water sales fourth of seven revenue items, behind hotel bills, bar tabs, and rents but ahead of shooting gallery, bowling alley, and bath house revenues.
101 Lexington Gazette 1 July 1852, p.3, col. 5; 1 June-7 September 1854, p. 4, col. 3. This advertisement offered Rockbridge Alum Water in “Barrels, half-barrels, or in smaller quantities if desired” and ran in each weekly edition for the entire summer; William Frazier, The Rockbridge Alum Springs Case: A Historical Narrative (Staunton, Virginia, Spectator, 1883), 29; see also “A statement of the quantity of Alum Water shipped...” Folder 8, Rockbridge Alum Springs Papers, Rockbridge County History Society Manuscripts, Leyburn Library, Washington & Lee University.
demijohns of water “bring a considerable revenue to the proprietors” of Rockbridge Alum Springs.¹⁰² For many smaller establishments the sale of their waters composed an important portion of their annual revenue. They could not rely on the annual crush of fashionable visitors that frequented the White Sulphur Springs and the hotel revenues such a crowd created; mineral water sales may have played a vital role in the smaller springs’ financial health. When visitors stayed away from the springs, cash still arrived at the hotels in the form of bottled water sales. They commercialized their mineral water and sold it on the market out of necessity.

Red Sulphur Springs felt the urgency to bottle and sell mineral water more than its competitors. Located 45 miles west of the White Sulphur Springs on the extreme edge of the Virginia springs region, Red Sulphur Springs depended on visitors who extended their journey to sample the Red’s curative waters. But with the development of springs in the eastern part of the state during the 1840s-1850s springs boom, the Red’s fortunes declined. Its attempts to bottle Red Sulphur water faltered, and William Burke, the proprietor of Red Sulphur Springs, decided to attack his main competition, White Sulphur Springs, for misleading consumers. In his 1842 guidebook to the Virginia Springs, Burke took exception to claims by John J. Moorman, the resident physician at White Sulphur Springs, “that those who are unable or unwilling to perform a journey to the Springs may use it at their own homes... with equally beneficial results as if drank fresh at the Spring.” In Moorman’s opinion, spring water lost none of its curative powers when bottled and transported across great distances.¹⁰³ Burke refused to accept

¹⁰² Porte Crayon [David Hunter Strother], Virginia Illustrated: Containing a Visit to the Virginia Canaan, and the Adventures of Porte Crayon and His Cousins (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1857), 176.
Moorman’s theory, feeling “morally bound not to sanction, by our silence, a
theory fraught, as we believe... with cruel injustice to the poor invalids.”
Burke accused Moorman of faulty science and making claims to medical
efficacy based on business imperatives.\textsuperscript{104}

Moorman responded by calling Burke’s accusations “unjust” and
“virulent,” in a treatise published the following year. He claimed that
eminent scientists agreed with his conclusions, and in turn accused Burke of
“sinister and selfish” motives. If invalids drank bottled White Sulphur
instead of traveling to the Red Sulphur Springs, Moorman asked, “what then
becomes of the patronage which the ‘Red’ once received?” Believing that
Burke was motivated by nothing but a pecuniary desire to enrich the Red
Sulphur Springs, Moorman wrote that his rival “is the \textit{proprietor} of a would-
be rival watering place; we the Resident Physician at the White Sulphur.
Which, under the circumstances, we would ask, is likely to feel the deepest
interest in the reputation of that water?”\textsuperscript{105} On both scientific and moral
grounds, Moorman claimed victory. He exposed Burke’s business interests in
discrediting his competition. But Moorman, who held a financial stake in the
White and relied on its success for his prosperity, acted from similar motives.
Each man sought to gain an advantage in the springs business and was not
above making devastating accusations to achieve his goal.

In the end, Moorman’s argument prevailed; White Sulphur Springs
solidified its place as the premiere resort and Red Sulphur Springs fell into
the second tier of springs establishments, its boasts of superiority never

\textsuperscript{105} Moorman, \textit{Some Notes on a Portion of a Work by William Burke, Entitled “The Mineral
Springs of Western Virginia”} (Philadelphia: Merrithew and Thompson, 1843), 4-5, 7-8, 13, 15, 20. Many physicians, like Burke and Moorman, simultaneously served as caregivers, principal
investors, and proprietors at numerous springs (Carson, “Early American Tourists and the
Commercialization of Leisure,” 377).
substantiated. Burke’s condemnation of bottled water as an ineffective medical agent fell on deaf ears. In fact, the commercialization of the mineral waters expanded into ancillary medical products like pills and powders. In both Virginia and New York druggists offered various mineral water derivatives in their shops. Advertisers declared that these pills and powders possessed “the same medical qualities, are as effectual in [their] operations, and precise in taste, as that taken immediately from the springs,” without the high cost of bottled water or an extended stay. Their claims were probably exaggerated, and provoked an immediate response from purveyors of regular mineral water. Saratoga promoters viewed pills and powders as a threat to their livelihood, and invoked medical authorities to support their case. They issued disclaimers that products called “Artificial Saratoga Water,” “Congress Water,” or “Saratoga Powders,” although possessing some medical qualities, “in reality bear no resemblance, either in their effects or their properties, to the mineral water, the name of which they have assumed.” Whichever side was correct, the marketing of pills and powders completed the process that bottling water began. Entrepreneurs succeeded in commercializing the springs to such an extent that consumers need not visit the springs to enjoy part of the experience.

There were, however, limits on the commercialization of mineral water. When owners of Saratoga’s Pavilion Spring attempted to levy an admission fee of fifty cents to one dollar for all who sought to drink the waters, leading

106 Lexington Gazette, 1 July 1852, p. 3, col. 5; 1 June-24 August 1839, various pages. This advertisement ran in each weekly edition throughout the summer; Saratoga Whig, 10 August 1841, p. 1, col. 1.
107 “Carpenter’s Saratoga Powders” advertisement, May, 1832, History 1830-1839 folder, SSPL.
108 Steel, Analysis of the Congress Spring, 22.
citizens called a public meeting on the grounds of the Congress Spring, which was conspicuously free and open to the public, to address the outrage. Saratogians welcomed the export of their water for profit, but rejected the notion that someone could charge for its use at the spring itself. The Pavilion’s proprietors argued that they intended to adorn and improve the grounds surrounding the springs by soliciting voluntary contributions from visitors. What began as a guest register and fence around the spring to maintain the grounds, with a small levy to support the improvements, turned into a public scandal. Even promises to maintain a separate pump outside the Pavilion grounds for those who could not afford the admission fee failed to sway public sentiment, as did claims that the proprietors’ motives were other than financial. Despite assertions that “profits resulting from the springs can be more readily obtained by bottling the water than by any other means,” Saratogians insisted that ever since Gideon Putnam’s time, access to the springs had been free and unencumbered.\textsuperscript{109} They acted against the Pavilion Springs enclosure to ensure that it remain so. The Pavilion’s efforts to “improve” the spring belonged to a part of the “culture of progress” that was unacceptable to local residents. Increased profits from bottled water sales posed no problem, but once the commercialization of the product infringed upon their traditional rights, they resisted. Drinking charges never materialized as a potential source of income for Saratoga’s springs entrepreneurs.\textsuperscript{110}

Instead, they looked for more subtle ways to increase their receipts. Rather than charging the locals, springs proprietors shifted the cost of

\textsuperscript{109} Daniel Benedict diary, 12 July 1840, p. 10, SSCH; Saratoga Whig, 6 July 1840, p. 2, col. 6; Saratoga Whig, 13 July 1841, p. 3, col. 1; Saratoga Whig, 20 July 1841, p. 3, col. 2.

\textsuperscript{110} This dispute seems similar to the ideological disagreement, minus the class issues, described in Paul Johnson’s article, “‘Art’ and the Language of Progress in Early-Industrial Paterson: Sam Patch at Clinton Bridge,” American Quarterly 40 (December 1988), 433-449.
commercialization to springs guests. Account books kept by various springs companies reveal an inventive list of fees and charges levied against hotel guests. Receipts from room and board accounted for three quarters of total revenues, but hotel managers discovered several other categories of assessment to boost the resorts' income. Bar tabs, postage fees, surcharges for using the baths, stable fees for horses, laundry charges, and any other miscellaneous assessments the proprietors could tack on provided the margin between profit and loss (see Table III). Although few people incurred these additional charges, they amounted to one-fourth of total receipts. With half of all guests staying less than a week and half of all bills amounting to just over thirteen dollars, proprietors needed these additional sources of revenue. They astutely noticed that over one third of guests brought horses with them and set fees high enough that income from horse care and stabling ranked second only to room and board charges in gross receipts.\footnote{Non-lodging charges accounted for $9,366.04 of $38,077.64 in gross receipts, or 26.4 percent. The median stay was 7 days; the median total paid was $13.14; and 37.4 percent of guests brought horses, spending $6,438.13 in total fees. Data calculated from ledgers listed in Table III.} Amidst such inflated charges, settling accounts was difficult at best, and many people began "to have long faces at the thought of the arithmetical combination impending over them in the financial department." One guest at Saratoga "foolishly" wondered how Gideon Putnam figured his bill: "He charges only $3 a week for board, and how he got my bill up to $12, I do not know." In the end guests usually agreed to pay, but one account at Hot Springs was closed in 1829 "by cash throne down."\footnote{Mary Jane Windle, Life at Washington, and Life Here and There (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1859), 215; Memoirs of an Emigrant: The Journal of Alexander Coventry, M.D., In Scotland, The United States, and Canada during the period 1783-1831, typed transcript, p. 1005, NYSLA; entry for Thomas Lewis, 7 September 1829, p. 46, Hot Springs Tavern Ledger, 1829-1831, Folder 28, Box 8, Daggs Records, LoV.} Guests did not share the proprietors' enthusiasm for
commercializing the springs experience, as expressed by their charging guests for every possible item.

Hotel proprietors paid little heed to guests' complaints, and continued to look for ways to maximize profits. Additional charges mounted exponentially, rooms were overcrowded, and the food seemed barely edible. White Sulphur Springs' efficient manager, Major Baylis Anderson, was sarcastically praised by one guidebook for “making four hundred people comfortable, in quarters calculated for half that number.” He earned the title “Metternich of the Mountains” from disgruntled guests by haughtily refusing lodging to some potential guests, lying about vacancies, and forcing the South's leading families to beg and plead for rooms. In essence, Anderson created demand at the already popular White by reducing the supply of rooms. Guests had little recourse against such insults, as “the immense crowd of last season might well have convinced [the staff] of their freedom from all dependence on public opinion.” Demand and scarcity had removed springs visitors' usual compunctions about comfort and luxury.

As if Anderson's attempts to create extra revenue were not enough, the kitchen reduced costs with little regard for public opinion. Guests who complained of sour milk were dismissed with the alibi that the cows had eaten mushrooms. In response to grousing about the atrocious board, the proprietor James Calwell coolly replied: “’Why sir, I charge you nothing for your board, but $10 a week for the use of the water, and if you consider this unreasonable, you are at liberty to depart when you please.’” Some guests saw through the ruse and insisted that the Calwells cheated their guests because

they "are so much in debt that they have no credit with the country people to purchase good provisions."

Virginia’s springs proprietors got away with it only because the South’s leading families enjoyed the company of their fellow members of the elite more than they disliked the conditions at the springs.

Even with these additional contributions to hotel balance sheets, proprietors cast about for more. James Calwell hit upon an ingenious method of extracting even more cash from his customers at White Sulphur Springs, by selling them exclusive rights to one of the “cottages” on the hotel grounds, the equivalent of modern time-shares. While owners enjoyed the right to stay in their cottage, they left the keys with the proprietor, were required to give ten days’ notice before their arrival, and allowed the hotel to lodge other guests there when the owners were not present. In addition, cottage privileges still required the payment of lodging fees “as a boarder at the Springs.”

The allure was twofold: first, rather than have to fight with the crowds and take one’s chances, the purchaser obtained guaranteed lodging at the White; and second, owners enjoyed the status of holding a permanent place at the summer gathering place of the South’s leading citizens. After a hesitant start in 1832, by the 1850s time shares had become so popular and lucrative that the cost of cottage privileges reached as high as $5,000. Calwell found fourteen buyers willing to put up this not insignificant sum, even when

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114 John Pendleton Kennedy, White Sulphur Springs, to wife, 26 July 1851, John Pendleton Kennedy Papers, West Virginia Collection, West Virginia University; Stephen Allen Memoirs, White Sulphur Springs, 12 August 1841, p. 185, N-YHS.
116 Indenture, White Sulphur Springs Company, December 24, 1858, UVa; Allen memoirs, White Sulphur Springs, 12 August 1841, p. 184, N-YHS; George William Featherstonhaugh, Excursion Through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices (London: John Murray, 1844) I: 70-71.

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others had already purchased most of the preferred spots. By selling cottage privileges, Calwell financed the construction of additional lodgings and assured himself a steady clientele—whether it was the owners themselves or other guests paying for the privilege of staying in the cabins. At the same time he created a greater sense of exclusivity and desirability at the White. Planters from Louisiana, Virginia, and Mississippi mingled under the porches’ eaves, and prominent families like Virginia’s Carters and Capertons, South Carolina’s Singletons, and Louisiana’s Rouths and Starkes owned cottages at the springs. Purchasing cottages guaranteed membership in this exclusive club and marked one as a member of the southern elite. In the case of time shares, the social interests of guests intersected with the business interests of springs proprietors.

Hotel proprietors complemented the quest for revenues with efforts to reduce labor costs. If the records from White Sulphur Springs are any indication, salaries for employees and hired slaves composed a significant percentage of hotel expenses. Looking at the numbers, businessmen in New York and Virginia took two very different paths toward keeping their labor costs low: Virginians depended upon leased slave labor, while New Yorkers hired free blacks and immigrant women. Visitors observed “hordes of Irish servant girls in attendance on the Hotels” at Saratoga, and a nearly equal number of free blacks served the guests as waiters. The French-Canadian and Irish women, as well as Yankee farm girls, who worked as

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118 Greenbrier County Deed Book 12, p. 510, September 5, 1832, Deed Books 22-25, 1858-1860, GCC, from notes in GBA.
119 Greenbrier Deed Books 22-25, 1858-1860, GCC, from notes in GBA. The cottage purchasers included five from Louisiana, one from Mississippi, and eight from Virginia.
120 The exact figure is 28.4 percent. See “Statement of Receipts and Expenditures of the White Sulphur Springs Hotel for Season of 1860,” Box 3, Philip St. George Cocke Paper, UVa.
maids, laundresses, and kitchen helpers were mostly young and single, while the black waiters and coachmen were mostly older and married. They shared a common place at the bottom of the social scale, which prevented them from demanding a high wage and saved Saratoga's hoteliers money.\textsuperscript{121} Located on major transportation routes and near large cities, Saratoga seemed to have no trouble finding cheap labor. Hotel operators at the Virginia springs also pared labor costs where they could, but with more difficulty than their competitors in Saratoga. Local labor was scarce and insufficient to meet the springs' seasonal needs. To alleviate the shortfall, Virginia's springs turned to skilled laborers from regional towns and major Southern cities.\textsuperscript{122} But the proprietors soon discovered that the white laborers they engaged, especially the musicians, could demand and receive high wages because of their skill. When the proprietors attempted to negotiate a lower price for the musicians' services, band organizers insisted on perks like subscription concerts because the musicians, "who are the best players in Baltimore, cannot afford to come for the pay, without those privileges, they being able to command more to go to other springs." Needing a band to entertain fashionable guests, springs proprietors acceded to most musicians' demands.\textsuperscript{123} The Virginia springs' relative isolation from markets in urban centers limited their efforts to control labor costs, while Saratoga's proximity enabled its hotels to keep salaries low.


\textsuperscript{122} Lewis, "Ladies and Gentlemen on Display," 145-151.

\textsuperscript{123} Christian Weber, Washington, to John Green, Warrenton Springs, 19 March 1842, Folder 2, Section 15, Keith Family Papers, VHS. For details of the negotiations, see other letters in Folders 1-2, Section 15.
To solve this discrepancy, Virginia's springs proprietors turned to the backbone of Southern labor, enslaved African-Americans. They soon discovered that limiting the labor costs of slaves was much easier than with white workers. Because of the seasonal nature of the springs business and its already high capital requirements, few resorts owned more than a handful of slaves. To do otherwise would have overburdened an already undercapitalized industry. Instead, they encouraged guests to bring their own personal slaves with them. Unfortunately, the plan failed. Only 32.4 percent of guests arrived at the springs with their attendants, even though owners paid half price to lodge and feed them. As a result, proprietors were obliged to lease slaves from plantations in the Virginia piedmont for service work. Contract negotiations for the summer season began as early as December, when one hotel manager remarked, "The most important matter at present is the hiring of hands." He faced a perpetual shortage of labor in the sparsely settled mountains of western Virginia, far from the eastern plantations that teemed with slaves. Even so, most springs managers leased slaves at reasonable terms, occasionally getting a slave's labor for the season free of charge. Some owners believed the waters would cure their slaves of certain ailments, like the eye complaint suffered by Helen Grinnan's slave William, and offered their slaves' services in exchange for lodging at the springs. Even if most owners, unlike Grinnan, demanded payment for the slaves' labor, the springs controlled labor costs by accepting payment in kind from some slaveowners and paying low seasonal lease rates to others. Although not part of the plantation complex, the springs utilized and benefited from the slave

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124 Data from hotel ledgers listed in Table III; J. Humphreys, White Sulphur Springs, to Jeremiah Morton, 11 December 1860, Box 3, Jeremiah Morton Papers, Box 3, Section 1A, Halsey Family Papers, UVa. See also letters dated 29 November, 18, 22, 25, 27, and 30 December 1860 in the same section of this collection.
economy.\(^\text{125}\) But by engaging in a labor market where slaves were the commodity, planters and proprietors altered the concept of slave as property into one of slave as labor resource. One requirement of the springs business, a seasonal and inexpensive labor supply, pushed springs proprietors into the market. Like their Saratoga counterparts, they negotiated, bargained, and contracted with their labor supply (or its owners) on the open market.

Efforts to commercialize leisure through capital investments, improved transportation networks, and better profit margins aided the springs business, but tell only part of the story. The springs were part of a larger tourist economy that emerged during the second quarter of the nineteenth century and relied heavily on shameless self-promotion for its success. The commercialization of leisure applied not just to business practices, but to the larger revolution in advertising and publishing as well. Springs businessmen carefully sought and cultivated the business of travelers by using print to construct an image of their resorts that appealed to the fashionable tourist.\(^\text{126}\)

One of the easiest ways for springs proprietors to construct a favorable self-image was through the publication of guidebooks. Travel accounts of people's visits to the springs had long been popular, whether published or circulated privately, but the emergence of the Northern Tour in New York during the 1820s and the Virginia springs circuit in the 1830s triggered the

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\(^\text{125}\) Helen Grinnan, to John Gray, Eastwood, 1843, Section 17, Keith Family Papers, VHS. See also, J. Howard, Fredericksburg, to Jones Green, Lee's Springs, 11 May 1846, Folder 2, Section 15; George Mason Hooe, Friedland, to Daniel Ward, Lee's Springs, 18 April 1842, and John Luskin, Warwick, 10 May 1843, Section 17; and the correspondence in Section 18, Keith Family Papers, VHS. For more on leasing slaves, see Lewis, "Ladies and Gentlemen on Display," 152-155.

\(^\text{126}\) Here I disagree especially with John Sears, who states in his excellent work, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), that the "revolution in transportation made tourism possible" (4). Many other factors combined to create the tourism boom of the mid-nineteenth century, which I discuss in the course of this dissertation.
publication of a new literary genre. Guidebooks kept their content simple and
direct, offering information, advice, and descriptions of leading tourist
attractions.\textsuperscript{127} The most popular northern guidebooks covered a variety of
locations, while Virginia's travel books focused on the leading springs and a
few natural landmarks. All shared a bias toward a particular mineral spring,
usually connected in some manner with the author. These books helped
popularize the springs and gave visitors the information they needed to
make the pilgrimage to America's watering places. But they also played a
leading role in creating the springs boom during the second quarter of the
nineteenth century. When they proclaimed, as did one Saratoga guidebook,
that "the day is not far distant when the present accommodations at Saratoga
will be of necessity doubled to accommodate the immense numbers who will
continue to make it their place of annual resort," they were both announcing
and causing a trend.\textsuperscript{128}

Perhaps the first "guidebook" to deal specifically with American mineral
springs was Gideon Miner Davison's \textit{The Fashionable Tour: Or, A Trip to the
Springs, Niagara, Quebec, and Boston, in the Summer of 1821}. Published in
Saratoga Springs by Davison's printing office, the book sought to aid travelers
by providing brief mentions of notable stops along the tour, distance tables,
and prices. By assembling a mass of disparate information, like the names of
hotels and their prices, Davison enabled someone with no knowledge of the
area to embark on a journey about which others raved.\textsuperscript{129} Perhaps even more

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{The Tourist, or Pocket Manual for Travelers}, 85.
\textsuperscript{129} Davison, \textit{The Fashionable Tour}, iii. Several other guidebooks appeared prior to Davison,
but none achieved the same level of commercial success or widespread use. See S.S. Moore and
T.W. Jones, \textit{The Traveler's Directory; or, A Pocket Companion: Shewing the Course of the Main
Road from Philadelphia to New York, and from Philadelphia to Washington...From Actual
Survey} (Philadelphia, 1802); George Temple, \textit{The American Tourist's Pocket Companion, or, a
Guide to the Springs and a Trip to the Lakes} (New York: D. Longworth, 1812).

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importantly, he compiled this information in an easily accessible and portable format: measuring only 3.75 by 5.5 inches and .75 inches thick, the 165-page volume was easily carried on a stagecoach, steamboat, or even horseback, fitting neatly inside a gentleman’s coat pocket or a lady’s reticule. Astutely judging his traveling market, Davison stated that “this work is designed as a pocket manual and guide.”

Others detected a need created by “the great increase of traveling on the northern fashionable routes” brought about in part by the new genre of guidebooks, and followed Davison’s lead. Titles like *The Northern Traveler* (1825), *The Tourist, or Pocket Manual...* (3d. ed., 1834), and *The Travelers’ Own Book* (1841) appeared over the next two decades.131 These publications, along with their successors and imitators, shared the compact size and common purpose with Davison’s work: “to be brief, and yet sufficiently explicit; to furnish statistical information without being tedious; and, in short, to give much in little on every subject that presents itself to the intelligent tourist.” Rather than go into detail on every subject, the guidebooks aimed to point out “as [the tourist passes], objects which most deserve his notice and regard.”

According to their authors, the guidebooks sold well. Prefaces in subsequent editions referred to “liberal patronage” and “ready sale” of earlier editions, as well as changing information (new hotels, better routes, evolving fashion), as the reasons for additional printings. Publishers certainly

welcomed this kind of puffery to increase sales, and the publication history of
several titles suggests that they may have been correct. Standards like
Davison’s *Fashionable Tour* went through as many as eight editions by 1840,
and the second guidebook on the market, Theodore Dwight’s *The Northern
Traveler*, printed six editions by 1841.\(^{133}\) Dozens of other guidebooks appeared
under a variety of titles throughout the 1840s and 1850s, many supported by
steamship or railroad lines.\(^{134}\) As both promoters and benefactors (in the
form of greater sales) of the tourist economy, guidebooks were quite
successful.

Although not as prolific as northern guidebooks, a series of publications
describing and promoting the Virginia springs emerged by the late 1830s.
They appeared much later than Saratoga’s guidebooks and were structured
very differently. The earliest of these books read like travelogues and
pretended to be little more. The first, Henry Huntt’s *A Visit to the Red
Sulphur Springs of Virginia* (1838), offered a detailed account of the medical
properties of one spring, the Red Sulphur, and a long list of its advantages.\(^{135}\)
Though not a guidebook per se, Huntt’s volume initiated the publication of
works designed to enhance the reputation of and attract visitors to the
Virginia springs. Its successor, Mark Pencil’s *The White Sulphur Papers*
(1839), explicitly attempted “to meet” what Pencil considered “the general
wish so often expressed, for some descriptive guide of the localities and

\(^{133}\) Davison changed the title to *The Traveler’s Guide Through the Middle and Northern
States, and the Provinces of Canada* in his fifth edition, published in 1835. Dwight also
tinkered with his title, mostly by adding new information on other tourist sites, like the
Pennsylvania coal region, New England, and later the Virginia springs.

\(^{134}\) For example, see *The Ohio and St. Lawrence Steamboat Company’s Hand-Book for
Travelers to Niagara Falls, Montreal and Quebec, and Through Lake Champlain to Saratoga
Springs* (Buffalo: Jewett, Thomas & Co., 1852).

\(^{135}\) Henry Huntt, *A Visit to the Red Sulphur Spring of Virginia, During the Summer of 1837:
With Observations on the Waters. With an Introduction, Containing Notices of Routes, &c. by
an Annual Visiter* (Boston: Duton and Wentworth, 1839).
attractions” of the springs region. Amid sketches of the social scene, Pencil described the major springs without going into much detail.\(^{136}\) Apparently the “general wish” he cited was not very specific. It was not until William Burke published his *Mineral Springs of Western Virginia* in 1842 that a comprehensive guide to the Virginia springs appeared.\(^{137}\)

But Burke’s work, and the rest of the guidebooks to the Virginia springs, differed significantly from those catering to the Saratoga trade. Virginia guidebooks emphasized the superior quality of one resort over others in almost every instance, while Saratoga’s played up the entire town, with an occasional nod to a favorite hotel. Visitors to Saratoga could choose to stay at any of a number of hotels, and the town as a whole benefited from their business. But Virginia’s springs were separated into several autonomous establishments spread across a vast distance. If a guest chose to stay at one spring over another, or extend his visit at one establishment to the detriment of another, the business of the slighted spring suffered. Burke’s heated debate with John Moorman, the resident physician at White Sulphur Springs, over the efficacy of bottled waters set the tone for writing about the Virginia springs. Virginia’s guidebooks focused on gaining an advantage in the competition for business above all else. As one visitor noted, “If you take the word of the proprietor, each spring is best & none good but his.”\(^{138}\)

Burke and Moorman continued their feud in print, as each published additional imprints of his guide with even more prejudice against his opponent.\(^{139}\) But it was not until the late-1840s, when Moorman included

\(^{137}\) Burke, *The Mineral Springs of Western Virginia*.
\(^{138}\) Larkin Newby to Cecilia Newby, 25 June 1823, Larkin Newby Papers, SHC.
\(^{139}\) Burke published three editions of his guide (1842, 1853, and 1857), and Moorman issued six springs-related publications before 1860 (1839, 1840, 1843, 1847, 1851, 1854, 1859).
information on other springs along with his attacks on Burke, that a definitive guide to ALL of the springs emerged. But even while Moorman claimed to “present such an account of the neighbouring Springs, as to enable the public to understand something of their general character,” he continued to maintain that “the main design of the present volume, is to bring the waters of the White Sulphur Springs... in a condensed view before the public.”\textsuperscript{140} Despite his best efforts, Moorman could not escape the naked boosterism of his rivals. Besides the battle for springs superiority between Burke and Moorman, at least six publications regarding the Virginia springs appeared before 1860, only one of which, Robert Cowan’s \textit{Guide to the Virginia Springs} (1851) pretended to be anything but a promotional tract for a particular resort. Cowan echoed Davison and Dwight in declaring his intentions to publish “some Guide to the Virginia Spring, of portable dimensions, and nothing of the sort having yet appeared, we have been induced to compile [one].”\textsuperscript{141} The fact that Cowan could claim that there was no comprehensive guide to the Virginia springs speaks to the fundamental business difference between the two springs regions. Saratoga viewed itself as a cooperative economic entity where the efforts of one publisher or hotel proprietor to boost business improved the prospects of the entire town. But Virginia’s springs proprietors operated individual establishments that suffered when a competitor attracted more attention to himself and away from them. The publication efforts in the two springs regions point out a

different approach to the same goal of increasing business by commercializing every aspect of its operation, including advertising.

The sources of much guidebook information further reveals their self-promotional role. Cowan straightforwardly admitted to drawing from other publications—much of his work was a verbatim excerpt from Moorman—as well as being "indebted to the proprietors of the Springs" for the facts communicated in his book. But authors, like that of one Saratoga guidebook, acknowledged more biased information "derived from highly respectable citizens of that place."142 In a town like Saratoga, which depended on the mineral springs for its prosperity, this information most likely came from leaders in the springs business. But guidebook writers furthered their symbiotic relationship with springs promoters by actively seeking information from the proprietors "in order to make this work more full and complete in future editions."143 One Saratoga hotel was even accused, in a scarcely concealed fictional satire, of "tip[ping] an editor to puff" the establishment when business lagged and guests began complaining. The hired big-city paper, called The Sewer, "while uttering the most fulsome adulation of everything connected with the Bath Hotel, frightened the discontented into silence through dread of its abuse." Yet a few critics persisted, and the local newspaper, whose editor was "the very creature of [the hotel owner] Mr. Grabster, the greatest part of the revenue of his small establishment being derived from printing the bills and advertisements of the Bath Hotel," responded with "a more than ever exaggerated eulogy of Mr. Grabster and his 'able and gentlemanly assistants.'"144 This stinging critique of a thinly-veiled

143 *Springs, Water-Falls, Sea-Bathing Resorts, and Mountain Scenery of the United States and Canada*, iii;
Gideon Davison was extreme in its sarcasm, but represented a broader trend. Hotels depended on favorable mentions in guidebooks to lure guests, and positive reviews in popular big-city newspapers added to their trade. Mr. Grabster’s effective and wholesale manipulation of the press ensured a positive public image for the springs and increased business. Few of his competitors shied away from the practice.

Besides helping springs promoters, the exchange of information benefited authors and publishers as well. When Edward Beyer set about to create his *Album of Virginia* in the mid-1850s, he relied on springs proprietors for views of their establishments. What Beyer created was quite different from any guidebook. His folio-sized, hand-tinted plates consisted of landscapes of some of Virginia’s most notable landmarks, including sixteen mineral springs hotels. Besides the images, the ornate book included descriptions of each scene. As lovely as the work appears, Beyer presented more than images of what he saw at the springs. In a disclaimer at the end of the text, Beyer noted that he “has obtained access to the future and proposed improvements at the Greenbrier White, Old Sweet, Yellow Sulphur, Montgomery White and Stribling’s Springs, and has given in advance the correct style of architecture, plans, locations of fountains, &c. prepared by the proprietors and their architects.”145 By including this information, Beyer ensured that his work would remain up-to-date and marketable, but he also provided free advertising for the proprietors of the five mineral springs. Whether or not the “improvements” were ever completed as drawn remains debatable, but one can imagine a southern belle studying Beyer’s book intently.

before settling on what appeared to be the most luxurious establishment for her springs tour the following summer. If springs proprietors could influence her decision by placing favorable information in a text, they had succeeded in manipulating the press to their advantage. In essence, they gained free advertising. This was a goal that promoters in both Virginia and New York enthusiastically pursued. Whenever possible, they used the market to their advantage.

The efforts of James Calwell and Gideon Putnam to establish mineral springs resorts amidst the bucolic settings of the mountains of western Virginia and sand flats of upstate New York ended very differently. Calwell continued to sink into debt and teeter on the verge of bankruptcy, even after his son William took over management of the White in the early 1830s. Roundly condemned as a "reckless proprietor" and "a man of simple, indolent, and inactive character," he and his seven sons were said to be "good for nothing. They all live here and do nothing but ride about and hunt." Most observers believed that the business "might be made a mine of wealth" by a better manager, with profits easily doubled. But the Calwells continued to run the White into the ground, and in 1855 finally sold the establishment to a joint stock company that pledged to undertake significant improvements and increase business. Yet even under new ownership, which the manager considered "very popular," having received "many compliments daily," the White failed to turn a profit. Despite the efforts of the Calwells and other springs proprietors, Virginia's establishments never achieved the success of

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146 William Bolling diary, 19 August 1841, p. 129, VHS; Trant diary, 29 August 1836, p. 17, GBA; Featherstonhaugh, Excursion Through the Slave States, I: 71-72.
147 Details of the sale are in Sections 3, 5, and Folder 1, Section 12, Stuart Family Papers, VHS. On the improvements, see the Lexington Gazette, 2 July, 6 and 27 August 1857.
their northern rivals at Saratoga. There Gideon Putnam’s eight children took over the family business after their father’s death in 1812 and developed both the town and their own prospects. Whether as hoteliers, landowners, real estate brokers, bankers, insurance executives, or railroad board members, they developed their inheritance to become one of the wealthiest families in the county. Despite the fact that Gideon Putnam’s children and several other influential entrepreneurs deserved much of the credit for Saratoga’s successes, commentators looked backward and praised the patriarch for his vision and business acumen. In the opinion of one gushing promoter, “He possessed a will which no ordinary obstacle could long withstand, and by his own exertions the din and hum of civilization soon took the place of the deep and solemn murmur of the primitive pine forest.” As firm believers in the culture of progress, Putnam and his fellow springs promoters viewed the bustling town that sprung from the forest an absolute success. Richard Allen, himself a highly successful physician and springs promoter, declared: “It is to Putnam that the village is indebted, more than to any other individual, for improvements at the Springs. ...He was, emphatically, the man of his day in the locality; and he made such an impression on the place of his choice, that his name must co-exist with the history of the village which his energy did so much to develop.”

148 Jeremiah Morton, White Sulphur Springs, to J.J. Halsey, 13 July 1860, Folder 2, Jeremiah Morton Papers, Box 3, Section IA, Halsey Family Papers, UVa. The operating deficit for 1860 was $62,724.58 on $144,625.60 in gross receipts, a negative balance of 43.7 percent. However, this figure does not include any revenue from stock sales (Statement of Receipts and Expenditures of the White Sulphur Springs Hotel for season of 1860, Box 3, Philip St. George Cocke Papers, UVa.
149 Detailed business records, deeds, and bank statements attest to the success of the Putnam family in expanding their inheritance are in the Putnam Collection, NYSHA.
Putnam's successors improved upon and expanded the business they inherited, while Calwell's sons frittered away the wealth of White Sulphur Springs. But both families, and both springs region in general, pursued opportunities to engage in market exchanges and commercialize their businesses. Virginia’s mineral water resorts followed Calwell’s example and operated as family and later corporation-owned enterprises that competed with other establishments in the region. Saratoga’s hotels, however, belonged to a single economic entity, the village, that depended upon a long-term view of development and a basic level of cooperation between the various businesses. To further the interests of the community the town fathers went so far as to limit the types of businesses in Saratoga and license undesirable “transient merchants.”

Their vision of a carefully designed village composed of a variety of competing enterprises focused around mineral water tourism differed from the diffuse scattering of stand-alone Virginia hotels with limited economic diversity. These Southern establishments competed against each other for the same group of invalids and fashionable tourists. Basically, there were distinctly Southern and Northern models for the springs business. One followed the plantation model of a centralized, independent entity that produced a commodity—in this case water, scenery, and society—for consumption by consumers. The other adhered to a developmental model that relied on individual entrepreneurship that opened the enterprise to others who in turn cooperated in the resort’s advancement. The Southern pattern, with its readiness to adapt innovative business practices like time-shares and especially incorporation, was actually more progressive and market-oriented than the Northern model, which

151 Section 8, “An Act to Amend the Charter of the Village of Saratoga Springs,” 14 April 1851, Village Board of Trustees Minutes, p. 206, SSCH.
continued to rely on individual ownership and locally-raised capital to expand its business. Ironically, the less progressive business practices of Saratoga's community-oriented hotels fared much better than the highly innovative Southern springs.

Despite the mixed records of these two springs regions and the families that led their expansion, in building the springs Calwell and Putnam helped create a dynamic leisure industry and tourist economy. Where once a few rustic taverns catered to invalids, by 1859 there were "not less than two hundred fashionable resorts, large and small, throughout the Union, whose profits probably amount to ten millions of dollars." Their faith in the market and the commercialization of leisure facilitated the mineral springs' success. But the booming new business of tourism relied on more than improved transportation networks, new sources of capital, better business practices, effective promotion, and enthusiasm for the market. Important cultural and social changes enabled the springs, and tourism in general, to prosper.153

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153 See especially Sears, Sacred Places, 3-10; Brown, Inventing New England, 34-38.
Chapter Two: Selling the Setting

Springs promoters like Calwell and Putnam relied on more than innovative business practices and shameless promotion to make their businesses prosper. In searching for new ways to advertise their resorts, Northern and Southern mineral springs proprietors capitalized on some of the important cultural trends in nineteenth-century America. Their “development of new and highly interesting natural scenery,” wrote one promoter, “greatly augmented the number of tourists” traveling to the springs.”¹ By developing and promoting their scenery as an improvement on nature, imitating the architecture of the ideal Northern village or Southern plantation, and invoking Indian legends or historical fables, springs promoters sought to identify their establishments as something other than isolated watering holes. Advertising the springs as sites of cultural sophistication amidst rural splendor allowed springs proprietors to increase their business and contribute to the formation of a national culture.

In doing so, Americans confronted the contradiction between the sublime power of wilderness and the potentially corrupting influence of civilization. They attempted to “improve” nature by removing the dangerous aspects, smoothing the rough edges, designing landscapes, and in general domesticating it. In trying to mediate the dichotomy between nature and civilization by creating a “middle landscape” where these conflicting ideals

¹ Gideon Minor Davison, The Fashionable Tour; A Guide to Travellers Visiting the Middle and Northern States, and the Provinces of Canada (New York: C.&H. Carvill, 1830), xvii.
coexisted harmoniously, Americans developed two regional springs landscapes, one Northern and one Southern. Yet both emerged from the same cultural desire to improve nature by man’s design. The landscapes, historical legends, and architectural styles of Northern and Southern springs were created to boost business and aid in cultural nationalization, but failed in two respects: their pastoral idyll rarely equaled the ideal established by cultural arbiters, and the springs’ effort to divorce themselves from the pressures of everyday life left the recurring conflict between civilization and nature unresolved. But people still came to the springs, looking for more than pleasant scenery.

Springs promoters cultivated the desire for landscapes by publicizing the natural scenery and romantic setting of their resorts as a calming antidote to society’s tensions. If the sanguine accounts of Virginia guidebook authors are true, “beautiful and magnificent” mountain scenery was visible from nearly every Virginia spring. The location of many resorts in narrow valleys between mountain ranges only reinforced the image. In fact, one author

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described each of the springs pictured in his album of views as located in either a “beautiful,” “delightful,” or “lovely” valley, sometimes using a combination of all three terms. Individual enterprises like Montgomery White Sulphur Springs seized on the desire for scenery by declaring that they were “one of the MOST ROMANTIC AND PICTURESQUE” springs in southwest Virginia. But Montgomery White Sulphur Springs was not the only claimant to the title; almost every spring held pretensions of scenic perfection. “The variety of scenery” in Virginia’s springs region attracted the attention “of every traveller of taste,” according to one over-enthusiastic guidebook. Writing about the original White Sulphur Springs, another booster declared that “nature has scattered beauties with a most lavish hand around this spot.” Promoters played to tourists’ preference for natural scenery at Virginia’s springs to increase their business, but they also satisfied a desire among many Americans to escape the unhealthy conditions of their urban homes of lowland plantations.

In contrast to the stagnant miasmas of the tidewater, the springs’ mountain climate earned the sobriquet “salubrious” from medical experts and springs promoters. Virginia’s “pure, bracing, and exhilarating”

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3 Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia* (Charleston, South Carolina: W.R. Babcock, 1845), 343; [Samuel Mordecai], *Description of the Album of Virginia: or, The Old Dominion, Illustrated* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1980 [1858]). These terms can be found in almost any promotional tract for the Virginia springs.

4 Theodore Dwight, Jr., *The Northern Traveler and Northern Tour, with the Routes to the Springs, Niagara, & Quebec, with the Coal Mines of Pennsylvania, also Tour of New England, and A Brief Guide to the Virginia Springs, and Southern and Western Routes* (New York: John P. Haven, 1841), 219.


6 *Springs, Water-Falls, Sea-Bathing Resorts, and Mountain Scenery of the United States and Canada; Giving an Analysis of the Principal Mineral Springs, With a Brief Description of the*
mountain air offered a respite from the stale atmosphere of cities and coastal areas, they claimed. It could "invigorate the enervated constitution, raise the drooping spirits, calm the agitated mind, inspire elasticity and strength to the moral and physical powers." The appeal of fresh air worked beyond the South, as even one hotel in the decidedly un-mountainous Saratoga Springs boasted that it "command[ed] a cool and healthy location and a delightful prospect." The advertisement continued to claim that "those who, while they enjoy the pleasures and restorativeness of our waters, would secure the bracing effects of mountain air, and the quiet of a country residence, will find at this establishment and locality all that they require." An invocation of the pastoral sensibility could not be much more direct. A local poet, Reuben Sears, continued the theme in a work that reads more like a promotional tract than a literary work. He urged city dwellers to flee the "dust, and smoke, and exhalations foul," as well as "summer's oppressive heat." They should

Come to these rural seats, where the sweet air
Of purest heaven you'll breathe, where unconfin'd
The cooling breezes play, and from th' effects
Of nerve relaxing heat these Springs supply

8 Saratoga Whig, 27 July 1841, p. 3, col. 3; see also Samuel DeVeaux, The Travelers' Own Book, to Saratoga Springs, Niagara Falls and Canada, Containing Routes, Distances, Conveyances, Expenses, Use of Mineral Waters, Baths, Description of Scenery, Etc. A Complete Guide, for the Valetudinarian and for the Tourist, Seeking for Pleasure and Amusement. With Maps and Engravements (Buffalo: Faxon & Reed, 1841), 89; Davison, The Traveller's Guide Through the Middle and Northern States and Provinces of Canada, 42; The Tourist, or Pocket Manual for Travellers on the Hudson River, the Western and Northern Canals and Railroads; the Stage Routes to Niagara Falls; and Down Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence to Montreal and Quebec. Comprising also the Routes to Lebanon, Ballston, and Saratoga Springs, with Many New and Interesting Details (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1838), 85.
A kind restorative, not known elsewhere.\footnote{Reuben Sears, \textit{A Poem, on the Mineral Waters of Ballston and Saratoga, with Notes Illustrating the History of the Springs and Adjacent County} (Ballston Spa: J. Comstock, 1819), 14.}

Saratoga’s appeal, then, was similar to Virginia’s: leave the stifling summer heat and enjoy our bucolic scenery and fresh air. But unlike the Virginia springs’ mountain setting, Saratoga rested on the sandy plains at the base of the Adirondack foothills, with mountain scenery far off in the distance. Yet the town still promoted its pleasant surroundings. What distinguished Saratoga was not its romantic scenery, but its contrast to the urban homes of so many visitors. While boasting the amenities and architectural style of a well-ordered town, Saratoga still enjoyed a rural setting. Tourists came from eastern cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and nearby Albany to enjoy Saratoga’s trees, fields, proximity to farmland, and cool air—in short, “a rural appearance not often met with in large towns.”\footnote{The Traveler’s Guide for Montreal, Quebec and Saratoga Springs (Montreal, 1859), 26.}

More than simply an advertising ploy to boost business, the springs’ promotion of fresh air and scenery appealed to wealthy Americans. During the early nineteenth century, an interest in romantic landscapes pervaded the Anglo-Atlantic world. Writers like James Fenimore Cooper and the New England Transcendentalists, as well as European Romantics, lauded the beauty and power of America’s scenery, while Thomas Cole and other artists developed a school of landscape painting based upon the scenery of New York State’s Hudson River Valley. Besides offering a pleasant view, America’s scenery became an integral part of the developing tourism industry, even composing the main attraction at locations like Niagara Falls, New Hampshire’s White Mountains, or the Peaks of Otter in Virginia. Searching
for sublime and beautiful views became an obsession for many American tourists.11

The desire of many upper-class Americans, whether Northern or Southern, for natural scenery spoke to a cultural need to escape the pressures of early national society. Americans viewed nature as a refuge from civilization's ills and as the repository of society's positive values. Simply contemplating nature, wrote the painter Thomas Cole, provided "a source of delight and improvement." It served "as an antidote to the sordid tendencies of modern civilization."12 Looking at and thinking about their surroundings separated wealthy Americans from their baser, more utilitarian countrymen.

Springs promoters capitalized on this impulse by including amateurish renderings of the springs hotels, with the encompassing countryside prominently featured, in almost every guidebook or medical tract. Dozens of springs visitors imitated these depictions by attempting sketches, watercolors, or elaborate paintings of the surrounding landscape, some of which made their way into print.13 Sketching and painting made enjoying scenery a

11 Dona Brown, Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 4-5, 34-38; Sears, Sacred Places, 3-10; Roger Haydon, ed., Upstate Travels: British Views of Nineteenth-Century New York (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 8-9. This scholarship deals with Northern landscape ideals, and there is a much thinner historiography on Southern landscape, with the exception of plantation architecture. For a useful introduction, see Charlene Marie Lewis, "Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1997), 104-108.
13 Numerous drawings are scattered around various archives. Some of the best include John H.B. Latrobe's watercolors in the Maryland Historical Society and the Library of Virginia. Some of his other pieces are privately owned but published in Perceval Reniers, The Springs of Virginia: Life, Love, and Death at the Waters, 1775-1900 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), frontispiece, 20, 84, 140, 196, 268. See also Porte Crayon [David Hunter Strother], Virginia Illustrated: Containing A Visit to the Virginia Canaan, and the Adventures of Porte Crayon and His Cousins (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857). An exhaustive collection of these images (many of which were published in newspapers) can be found in the Folio Drawer, Saratoga Room, Saratoga Springs Public Library. See Nathaniel Parker Willis, American Scenery; or, Land, Lake, and River, (London: George Virtue, 1840) for a sampling of the published views witnessed by most fashionable travelers.
participatory activity. On an 1816 side trip from Saratoga to nearby Glens Falls, James Skelton Gilliam reported that a caravan of ladies "were all quite anxious to see the sketch I was making, + got out of their carriages to see that + the romantic scenery around."\textsuperscript{14} Yet his was not the first encounter with amateur artists at the springs. A few years earlier Abigail May and her friend Mr. French "took a walk. He led the way to the Bridge and when there produced paper and pencil—urging my taking a view so beautiful—it was vain to refuse."\textsuperscript{15} By engaging the scenery, Gilliam and May were participating in the aesthetic of romantic landscapes and demonstrating their own cultural sophistication. Springs promoters recognized the popularity of landscape images and incorporated them into promotional materials. The artistic renderings that appeared in guidebooks and newspaper accounts complemented personal sketches and paintings. In the middle of the emergence of American landscape painting, led by the Hudson River School, amateur artists, guidebook authors, and professional artists joined to advance the popularity of landscapes and the springs. In the process, scenery became a commodity produced and consumed by tourists, just like other parts of the springs experience.\textsuperscript{16}

Promoters looked to more than scenery to attract visitors to their resorts. By coupling scenery with local springs lore, springs proprietors helped create a sense of nostalgia and cultural legitimacy at their resorts. Historical associations proved especially appropriate at Saratoga, where the scenery left many visitors unimpressed. While its landscapes proved mundane, the very name Saratoga evoked memories of patriotic glory, especially of the

\textsuperscript{14} James Skelton Gilliam diary, 29 July 1816, p. 31, Library of Virginia [LoV].
\textsuperscript{15} Abigail May diary, 7 June 1800, New York State Historical Association [NYSHA].
\textsuperscript{16} Sears, \textit{Sacred Places}, 14-16, 49-71. As Sears points out, many tourists' responses to landscapes failed to meet the expectations raised by cultural standards and guidebook descriptions. Published and manuscript travel accounts tend to confirm this thesis.
 Revolutionary War victory over British General John Burgoyne's troops at nearby Bemis Heights. Early guidebooks emphasized the "turning point of the Revolution," devoting almost as many pages to battle recapitulations as to the waters' medical efficacy. Even British tourists felt compelled to visit the battlefield, although their reactions lacked the exuberance of most Americans' joyful epistles. In addition, other Revolutionary War and Seven Years' War forts and battlefields were only an overnight excursion away at Lake George and Ticonderoga. These sites witnessed some of the crucial struggles for American independence, and pilgrims to the shrines expressed their affinity for these icons of American culture. By visiting Revolutionary War battlefields, Americans announced their cultural independence.

But Saratoga Springs' most mentioned, and most culturally useful, historical moment related to its discovery. Local tradition held that Sir William Johnson, the British liaison to northeastern Indians, was the first white man to have visited the springs. While he suffered from a seemingly incurable leg wound sustained during the 1755 battle against the French at Lake George, Johnson's Indian allies reportedly carried him to Saratoga's High Rock Spring in August, 1767. After taking the waters for several days, Johnson recovered enough to walk over thirty miles to his estate at Johnson Hall, and never felt pain in the leg again. This tale was first recounted in John H. Steel's An Analysis of the Mineral Waters of Saratoga and Ballston, originally published in 1817. Reissued in at least nine editions by 1861, Steel's account became the standard version of Saratoga's discovery, recycled by springs promoters well into the twentieth century as an example of Saratoga's historic

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past. Romantically, the story worked well and provided a compelling tale about Saratoga’s early history. Johnson’s stature and his miraculous cure spread the fame of the springs, helping them develop into a major resort. The only problem was that Johnson did not actually visit Saratoga until 1771 and most likely received his cure at one of Saratoga’s early competitors, Lebanon Springs, well to the east on the Massachusetts border. But the story served its purpose in the early nineteenth century and helped Saratoga grow.

The utility of the Johnson legend, as well as other Indian tales, lay not in the veracity of the visit, but the romantic image of Indians drinking at a spring later discovered by a British-American hero. During the early nineteenth century, as Americans struggled to identify a national culture distinctive from that of their colonial parent, Great Britain, memories of the Revolutionary era and the idealized image of the noble savage became increasingly important and prevalent cultural symbols. Both were distinctly American.

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19 In a 1953 letter to the Saratoga Springs City Historian, the editor of the Sir William Johnson Papers pointed out this discrepancy, based on a close reading of Johnson’s letters, but the revised date did not appear in print until 1988 (See Grace Maguire Swanner, Saratoga: Queen of Spas [Utica, New York: North Country Books, 1988], 103; Ted Spiegel, Saratoga: The Place and Its People [New York: Henry N. Abrams, 1988], 34). See Milton W. Hamilton, Senior Historian, State Education Department, University of the State of New York, Division of Archives and History, Albany, New York, to Evelyn Barrett Britten, City Historian, Saratoga Springs, New York, 23 April 1953, Saratoga Springs City Historian’s Office [SSCH].

20 Robert E. Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 86-96; Sears, Sacred Places, 3-7; Jay
Similar tales existed at the Virginia springs, where proprietors also called upon their own Indian legends to stir the visitors' imaginations. For example, Warm Springs lore told of an Indian warrior traveling from beyond the Alleghenies to the council fires of the eastern tribes. Weary and dispirited from his hard journey, the "Young American Leopard" took refuge in the base of a valley and stumbled upon the "Spring of Strength." He plunged in and "a new life invigorated his wearied spirit, new strength seemed given to his almost rigid nerves." The next morning he awoke refreshed and continued his journey to the council fires, where he proved "more graceful in address, more commanding in manner, more pleasing in look, and more sagacious in policy" than any other present. The tale must have brightened the hopes of some of the many politicians at the springs, as well as the springs' business.

Indians represented raw, unspoiled wilderness that existed at the springs before the arrival of European-American civilization. This image of the Indian helped Americans define themselves in opposition to the uncivilized tribes who once drank the same waters. But during the Jacksonian era, when few Indians remained east of the Mississippi, the image Americans created was one of a nostalgic, friendly Indian divorced from the tensions and


transformations of modern society. The “noble savage” allowed Americans to imagine themselves as part of a different, less hectic, more virtuous time.\(^{23}\) For towns and mineral springs attempting to attract tourists, this allure was immediate: provide an Indian legend that contrasted with the highly competitive, urban society of Jacksonian America, and more wealthy travelers who aligned themselves with this image would visit your location. In this tradition, springs resorts invented, adopted, and promoted their own histories.

Springs promoters looked beyond Indians for sources of historical legends. Another, less romantic, Saratoga tale told the story of Crazy Jake, a half-breed who inhabited the Indian camp at the High Rock in 1787. Inexplicably demented, he kidnapped a young woman and terrorized seasonal visitors. Only with the aid of friendly local Indians were the story’s heroes, guests of local patroon Philip Schuyler, able to rescue the young woman and eventually dispose of Crazy Jake. Like in most sentimental fiction of the time, the female and male protagonists married in the end. While not a literary masterpiece, the story called forth images of past glories at the springs and reminded visitors of the wilderness that once existed where now “the same spot is a rich and cultivated lawn.”\(^{24}\) Americans needed not wander “too far into the regions of romance” to remember that “on the very spot where beauty, taste, and fashion now strike the keys on the piano, or mingle in cotillions, the tawny children of the forest once raised the song, or joined in the festive dance.”\(^{25}\)

Similarly, Virginia’s White Sulphur Springs possessed a romantic legend. It told of the “monster wolf,” Banco, who guarded the spring and


devoured the fairy-like Sylphs who attempted to drink its waters. Banco slept but once a year, and during one of his somnolent periods a particularly beautiful Sylph snuck near the spring. She seized Banco’s magic wand and opened the spring, sending a tide of water cascading down on the sleeping wolf, who temporarily escaped the flood by ascending a nearby mountain. But the waves, ridden by the specters of Banco’s Sylph victims, eventually engulfed him. The memory treasured by most antebellum visitors was not of Banco, but the

... fair Sylph who perill’d all;
Who gave a life made up of bliss
To freshen ours with joy like this.²⁶

The tale appealed to those who sought an idealized golden age at the springs, an era of virtuous maidens and personal sacrifice, not the social tension and competition of Jacksonian America.

These legends contributed to the developing American culture that looked to native histories and local scenery for meaning. At the springs, Americans heeded Thomas Cole’s insistence that America need not feel inferior to Europe because it lacked ancient ruins, but instead should recognize the unspoiled beauty of its natural scenery. One early guidebook author extended Cole’s nationalism by criticizing Europe’s “marks of ancient ignorance” and “remnants of former barbarism blended with tyranny.” Instead of viewing such scenes, the author opined, Americans should recognize that “our own country presents a fairer and nobler scene.”²⁷ Most visitors, another guidebook suggested, would prefer to relax in the rural

splendor of America's resorts while imagining scenes from romantic authors like Sir Walter Scott and Frank Tyrrel than tangle with the crowds in coastal cities or handle the supervisory duties of a large plantation, much less wrestle with their own cultural inferiority complex while in Europe. In essence, the springs offered an antithesis to the world of early nineteenth-century life. Visitors projected their imagined, ideal society on the springs, rather than the tawdry, mundane reality of their everyday existence. In this evocation of a golden age, Northerners and Southerners made equally nostalgic efforts, and springs promoters encouraged their imagination.28

Springs proprietors recognized this trend toward pleasant landscapes and a romanticized past. They made every effort to create, in the spatial organization of springs resorts, a physical expression of the ideal society. In the process, two distinct regional architectural styles developed: Virginia’s springs followed a model of a rural, carefully organized plantation, while Saratoga resembled a quaint but developed village. Virginia’s mineral springs resorts operated as single entities spread across the state’s western reaches, yet followed a common architectural style. Whether nestled on the floor of a narrow mountain valley, pressed so close against the mountain walls as “to afford only room enough for the erection of the buildings,” or on a broad alluvial plain near a mountain stream, the Virginia springs imitated the layout and appearance of a Southern plantation. They featured long rows of connected, single-story cabins with covered porches centered around a multi-storied, colonnaded structure fronted by a grand porch in the “Gothic style.” It was the cabin system, the distinctive feature of the Virginia springs, that lent

the springs their rural character and quaint charm. The springs were inventing their own regional architectural style. By naming the rows after various Southern states and cities, and omitting Northern names, the springs' proprietors furthered their regional distinctiveness. But what truly identified the cabins as Virginian, according to promoters, was the way they "harmoniz[ed] in general appearance" with the other buildings. While the individual rows appeared "beautiful and imposing," the grounds as a whole displayed what one viewer termed "a good deal of taste."

Buildings were arranged in what reviewers called "a hollow square," a sweeping arc, or "as near a parallelogram as the nature of the ground will permit." Inside this semi-square sat the principal buildings of the springs, including the main hotel, dining room, ball room, kitchen, various "rows" of small cottages for housing guests, and the mineral spring itself (see Map 3 and Figure 1).

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29 C.O. Lyde diary, 5 July 1841, pp. 22-23, Duke. This term appears throughout writings on the springs, but is used in a very loose sense. See, for example, Moorman, *The Virginia Springs, with their Analysis*, 247. Generally the Virginia springs stuck to the more traditional Greek Revival architectural style until the final stage of springs-building in the mid-1850s. Only then did they begin adopting the more modern Gothic and Italianate styles (see John Gibson Worsham, Jr., "A Place so Lofty and Secluded": Yellow Sulphur Springs in Montgomery County," *Virginia Cavalcade* 26 [Summer 1977]: 31; Lewis, "Ladies and Gentlemen on Display," 90-100, 113.


31 "Visit to the Virginia Springs, During the Summer of 1834, No. I," *SLM* I (May 1835): 474-476; Edmund Randolph, White Sulphur Springs, to Marianne O'Meade, Elk Hill, Virginia, 4 August 1840, Edmund Randolph Papers, Virginia Historical Society [VHS]. The important older springs (particularly White Sulphur Springs, Sweet Springs, and Salt Sulphur Springs) were located in the southern part of the springs region.

32 Frontispiece of Moorman, *The Virginia Springs; With Their Analysis*. 

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Virginia courthouse, roughly 200 square yards. The comparison reveals the extent to which Virginians sought to duplicate the spatial and social organization of their cultural institutions, as well as the similarity evoked by the springs’ appearance.

Proprietors used “convenient and judiciously planned” walkways that crisscrossed each resort’s lawn to create a lovely setting for socializing. The lawn, “enamored with a rich coat of verdure,” appeared to be “rolled out like a carpet.” Undulating across the landscape and “overshadowed by numerous majestic sugar maples” and oaks, the lawn gave “the whole place a grove-like appearance.” The organization of the lawn and buildings made, in the opinion of one guidebook, “the premises picturesque, and beautiful.” The vast majority of guests agreed with this estimation, calling the springs “some fairy scene or some delightful dream” or “a monument to a Sylvan.” This was a pastoral scene, but a carefully composed one of neatly arranged and designed buildings. Even the manicured lawn and well-distributed trees belied the planned natural setting. It was a “grove” in the sense of a cultivated orchard of trees, not a wild, untouched forest. Creating scenery was part of a

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33 Beverly Tucker, Lee’s Springs, to Lucy Ann Tucker, Bowling Green, Virginia, 21 August 1837, Box 47, Papers, February 1837-June 1838, Tucker-Coleman Collection, Manuscripts Division, Swem Library, College of William and Mary [SWM]; Edward Beyer, Album of Virginia (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1980), 18; John W. Jarvis diary, 9 July 1849, Manuscript and Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia [UVA].


37 Susan Bradford Eppes, White Sulphur Springs, to Pa, 1 August 1847, Folder 1, Susan Bradford Eppes Papers, SHC; For a nearly identical description of the “fairy isle” that greeted visitors, see Mark Pencil [Mary Hagner], The White Sulphur Papers, or Life at the Springs of Western Virginia (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839), 23; John L. London diary, 13 August 1838, mss. vol. I, Calder Family Papers, SHC; Windle, Life in Washington, 166.
larger cultural project to "civilize" America by applying the standards of refinement to the landscape.38

The resulting "middle landscape" at the Virginia springs looked "like quite a city" to one visitor. Another compared the scene to a deserted village, complete with well-organized buildings and pathways.39 Ironically, these conflicting images did not contradict the rural ideal of antebellum Virginia. Because the impulse to improve nature originated in coastal, urban areas where people rarely faced unaltered nature, many of the springs' wealthy Southern visitors found the cultivated setting perfectly acceptable and in accordance with their construction of nature. They wanted not wilderness, but a managed landscape. The "city" was not an overcrowded, hectic, and disordered metropolis, but a carefully planned and neatly organized collection of buildings and parks, much like the organized upper-class neighborhoods of contemporary American cities.40 No ramshackle assemblage of crowded streets and bustling commerce, the springs celebrated order and graceful organization. The rows of single-story cottages, manicured lawns, and grand central buildings followed a style of elegant simplicity. The park-like setting, with its scattered buildings centered around a large white "big house," reminded visitors of their homes on large plantations.41 The spatial arrangement of the various springs illustrated the cultural ideal of

38 Miller, Empire of the Eye, 11-14; Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 40-42. Nash is one of the few secondary sources to conspicuously include evidence from both Northern and Southern sources.
39 Eppes, White Sulphur Springs, to Pa, 1 August 1847, Folder 1, Susan Bradford Eppes Papers, SHC; "Journal of a Trip to the White Sulphur Springs, August 1836," August 23, p. 13, GBA.
antebellum Virginia—the graceful simplicity of nature, or at least nature improved by the creature comforts that springs hotels provided—as reflected in the perfectly ordered plantation. Presumably, springs proprietors figured more Southerners than Northerners would visit the springs to view the perfection of Southern society.42

A distinctly different regional architecture and natural aesthetic prevailed at the North’s main resort, Saratoga Springs. When Gideon Putnam designed his town in the early 1800s, he focused it around a central 120 foot-wide artery.43 Individual hotels fronted by columned piazzas displayed a more urban architectural style in the Greek Revival and Gothic traditions.44 The most remarkable, as well as functional, portions of the large hotels were the grand porches that faced the town’s main thoroughfare, Broadway. Many hotels placed their steps to the side of the building, rather than the front, lest the sense of size and grandeur be lessened. No matter that the “high flight of stairs” at the United States Hotel “render[ed] it very inconvenient” to some travelers, the sine qua non was an imposing facade.45 This pattern of hotels constructed almost atop the street itself, with little room between the structure and the road, focused visitors’ attention on the

43 J. Scott, “A Map of a number of building Lots and Buildings near the Congress Spring the property of Gideon Putnam as the same was Surveyed in June 1808,” Putnam Collection, NYSHA (see Map 1). Only Bath/Beckley Springs in Virginia shared Putnam’s forethought in laying out a village plan before the development of the resort (see “Untitled Map of Bath, Virginia, ca. 1777, Fairfax Family Papers, LoV, from Christopher Edwin Hendricks, “Town Development in the Backcountry—Virginia and North Carolina” [Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1991], 285-288).
hotels and the image they presented to the public (See Map 4). The architecture was intended to produce awe, and for the most part did. Visitors commented that Saratoga's hotels, "exhibiting a very handsome and imposing appearance, give an air of importance, of gracefulness, and animation." Saratoga's architecture sought to impress its wealthy urban visitors with its grandeur and sophistication, rather than to please them with order and simplicity like the Virginia springs. When local boosters declared the United States Hotel "probably the largest and one of the most expensive of the kind in the United States," they viewed size as a positive attribute. They were trying to achieve the "improving aspect" Elkanah Watson had mentioned years before. Improvement meant bettering nature and shaping an ideal scenery of impressive building and cultivated gardens. Entrepreneurs were stripping nature of its dangerous elements and creating a safe, domesticated landscape reserved for those who could afford to pay to see it. They hoped to attract more visitors, especially those from the wealthy and fashionable class, by creating a better, more perfect version of Northern society.

But for all of Saratoga's impressive architecture, it lacked the natural scenery that Americans demanded at their resorts. One early visitor termed the surroundings "peculiarly wild and rude," concluding that "Nature indeed has not done much to beautify this spot—in truth tis dreary—and nothing to

46 Henry Tudor, Narrative of a Tour in North America (London, 1834), 190. See also Memoirs of an Emigrant: The Journal of Alexander Coventry, M.D. In Scotland, The United States, and Canada during the period 1783-1831, typed transcript, 24 July 1822, II: 1879, New York State Library and Archives [NYSLA].
recommend it." This comment, made by an American in 1800, that nature was insufficient reveals the early presence of cultural assumptions on the proper appearance of landscape and a willingness to improve nature to achieve that goal. Yet despite its scorn for Saratoga’s landscape, some of the harshest evaluations came from English visitors. These commentators, used to a higher standard of refined landscape in their own country, found it odd that Americans flocked to a place which presented “such a neglected appearance.” They claimed to have “seen no resort in the country so poor in natural beauties.” Americans criticized Saratoga’s appearance as well, calling it, even in the 1840s, an “immense wilderness of hotels—like stray cabbages in a potato patch, situated in the midst of an indeterminate sandy plain.”

Had the critics looked a little closer, they would have discovered that Saratoga’s recent development and deliberate efforts to cultivate a pleasant image contributed to its problems. “Redeemed from the forest” by Gideon Putnam’s lumber business in the late 1790s, the town’s main road in 1836 was still “just a clearance from the woods, with its centre cut up by the carriages, and filled with the native dust and sand, and the margins are overrun with grass.” Ironically, the profits from destroying wilderness gave Putnam and his successors the means to construct a pastoral retreat. But it took years to perfect; the most obvious result of Putnam’s clear-cutting was that Saratoga seemed “destitute” of ornamental trees. Without trees, visitors strolling the streets felt “naked, and exposed to the full blaze of the sun.” To make matters

49 May diary, 28-29 June 1800, NYSHA.
51 Reed and Matheson, A Narrative of a Visit to the American Churches.
worse, the streets lacked even rudimentary improvements like curbs and sidewalks, making it "impossible to step abroad without plunging ankle deep in sand, and without being enveloped in a cloud of dust, raised by the wind and the constant passage of carriages."\textsuperscript{52}

This 1820 critique appeared in a local paper under the name "A Virginian," a fact that must have upset the town fathers. They had hoped to create a pleasant destination that appealed to the cultural sensibilities of elite Americans from North and South. But the "Virginian" exposed their pretensions and threatened the patronage of Southern planters, a key Saratoga constituency. So the Village Board of Trustees attempted to remedy the problem. In the ensuing years it passed resolutions granting highway tax reductions for property owners who curbed the sidewalk in front of their establishments, fined those who failed to keep the area in front of their property swept clean, and issued further highway tax rebates for planting trees along sidewalks. The Board even reserved the right to approve all signs placed along Broadway.\textsuperscript{53} Saratoga's projected image of a cultivated, refined village arose not by accident but by active governmental involvement. Creating and promoting the town's landscape was not an individual effort, as in Virginia, but a group endeavor. As a result of these improvements, visitors began noting that "the sterile and shining sand so universal in this region is becoming covered, year after year, with a loftier and denser foliage from the multitudes of ornamental and shade trees everywhere planted."\textsuperscript{54} People ceased complaining about the barren landscape and praised Broadway.

\textsuperscript{52} "Letter of a Virginian," Albany Statesman, 6 September 1820.
\textsuperscript{53} Resolutions for 1 April 1843, 13 December 1843, 22 April 1845, 11 April 1846, 23 April 1853, pp. 26, 30, 53, 64, 267, Village Board of Trustees Minutes, 1840-1866, SSCH. Rebates ranged from ten cents per foot of sidewalk curbed (later raised to twelve and a half cents, and 25 cents), to 62.5 cents for each elm or maple planted at 15-20 foot intervals.
\textsuperscript{54} "Saratoga—Opening of the Season," New York Tribune, 13 June 1842.
for being "beautifully flanked with trees for miles."\textsuperscript{55} One of the most striking aspects of these scenic improvements is their planned nature. Even the often-admired Congress Park owed its loveliness in part to the designs of the village fathers. They obtained the right to construct fountains, keep paths to the springs open, maintain the cleanliness and purity of the water, and regulate the bottling of spring water in the original Village Act of Incorporation.\textsuperscript{56} In improving their village's appearance, Saratoga's leaders, like Gideon Putnam before them, kept the larger goal of improving business in mind.

Interestingly, neither the Virginia springs nor Saratoga directly imitated the Georgian architecture that developed at English spas during the mid-eighteenth century. American resorts lacked the sweeping crescents, multi-story apartment buildings, or central market squares of English cities like Bath. This was due in part to the different origins of spa towns: in England, they developed in already settled country towns, while American resorts sprung from the wilderness. Virginians may have expressed an affinity for English gardening forms, but they never imitated English spa architecture. Americans followed their own architectural styles that attempted to recall the virtue of antiquity in elaborate columned buildings. This preference for Greek revival styles reflected the ideology of republicanism and its emphasis on creating a virtuous nation independent of Europe's excesses of social luxury. In this context, American springs architecture contributed to the larger project of creating a unique national culture.\textsuperscript{57} Their regional styles emerged from

\textsuperscript{55} Mary Thompson, Saratoga Springs, to Mrs. Frances M. Lewis, Philadelphia, 27 July 1854, Folder 40, Box VII, Conway Whittle Family Papers, SWM.

\textsuperscript{56} Act Incorporating the Village of Saratoga Springs, 17 April 1826, Acts of New York State Legislature, Village Records, SSCH.

\textsuperscript{57} Phyllis Hemby, \textit{The English Spa, 1560-1815: A Social History} (London: Athlone Press, 1990), 114-130; Lewis, "Ladies and Gentlemen on Display," 101-104. David Hackett Fischer's thesis that colonial regional architectural styles developed based on the different English origins of various regions' settlers does not seem to apply to mid-nineteenth century springs architecture in Virginia and New York (\textit{Albion's Seed}, 62-68, 264-274).
the same desire to boost business by creating a distinctive American landscape, but diverged in their vision of how that landscape should appear. These differences were due in part to varying levels of enthusiasm for the intrusion of civilization into nature. Many Northerners saw technology and material improvements as a positive good that could actually improve nature, and embraced advancements like Saratoga’s grand hotels and cultivated landscapes. Other regions, especially the South, were more ambivalent and preferred a more bucolic image, like at the Virginia springs. The romantic indolence of the plantation ideal allowed Southerners, and the Northerners who visited Southern springs, to imagine themselves as outside the social tensions and acquisitiveness of American society. This identification of the springs with values that contradicted the prevailing norms of American culture allowed resorts across the country to claim the status of a refuge from everyday life. Southern and Northern springs appealed to the pastoral ideal of the plantation idyll that authors in both sections popularized as a means to improve their business. They viewed scenery and architecture as advertisements of and appeals to the cultural ideals of their wealthy clientele.58

But as was often the case, these efforts failed to meet the approval of the same elite Americans they were designed to impress. Whatever the exterior appearance of Saratoga’s hotels or Virginia’s cabins, guests readily volunteered their opinions of the accommodations. Some visitors to the Virginia springs thought quite well of the cottages, calling them “a palace”

and "very commodious." Decorated with wild flowers and spruce boughs, the apartments had "an air of neatness + charming comfort." But the cabins and lodgings at the springs possessed a dubious reputation. One visitor seemed surprised to remark that "Every account I had read were all unfavorable. But we were most agreeably undeceived."\textsuperscript{59}

Most guests, however, were not so charitable, especially regarding the condition of the lodgings themselves. The cabins generally reached only one story in height, and were often raised above the ground by supports or by being placed on the side of a hill. They contained several rooms, divided between lodging and sitting rooms, each so tiny that one visitor referred to his cabin as a "Small Box."\textsuperscript{60} Front and rear doors and windows enlarged the space, but the sparse furnishings of "three wooden chairs, a common board table, a small looking glass of 12 to 14 inches, no carpet on the floor, and a bed or mattress of husks, nearly as hard as the floor" did little to improve the comfort level (see Figures 3 and 4).\textsuperscript{61} The similarity to slave cabins is striking, and the willingness of leading Southerners to lodge there even more surprising. No Southern accounts compared the cabins to slave quarters, preferring to find other sources of complaint. But the social inversion must have tickled the back of their brains.

Besides the accommodations' social irony, guests also endured long waits for inferior rooms. When Levin Smith Joynes could not find lodging at the White Sulphur Springs hotel, he took refuge in a sub-par hotel nearby, where

\textsuperscript{59} H.P. Tompkins, White Sulphur Springs, to W.P. Smith, Gloucester Court House, Virginia, 21 September 1832, Folder, April-December 1832, Box 3, William Patterson Smith Papers, Duke; Mr. Cummings, "Guide/Jumble of Advice for Summer's Journey," 25 July 1805, Folder 7, Box 1, Series A, Mackay-Stiles Papers, SHC; P.G., White Sulphur Springs, to Elizabeth Greene, New York, 7 July 185[?], GBA.
\textsuperscript{61} Six Weeks at Fauquier, 22; Stephen Allen Memoirs, 12 August 1841, p. 184, N-YHS.
the Virginian “passed such a night as I have not experienced in many a year. There were five of us in one room, and I was a perfect stranger to all the rest. The room was dirty, and in all respects uncomfortable.” Joynes’ situation did not improve once inside the White: “the pleasure of my visit was somewhat seriously impaired by my uncomfortable lodging. I was in a very old cabin, which had a very extensive airhole between the logs, right over my bed; and as the night of my arrival was very cold, and I had but a single blanket, I hardly slept at all, and took cold.” 62 Other less lucky families secured spaces on the parlor floor. 63 Members of the Southern elite found these conditions quite jarring, and a stark contrast to their relatively luxurious home lives. But their criticisms seem tepid compared to those of European travelers.

During his 1843 visit to White Sulphur Springs, the British geologist George Featherstonhaugh registered similar complaints about his cabin’s narrow, oblong room that proved “very inconvenient.” Built against the side of a hill, the cabin had two doors: “The western one opened upon the hill, and you could step out upon it immediately; but the eastern and principal entrance was by a steep flight of broken and dangerous wooden steps.” Even the furniture failed to please Featherstonhaugh, “there being only two low bedsteads coarsely put together with rough planks.” His bed, a “narrow wooden frame... was so broken-backed that it tilted up in the middle. Finding it utterly impossible to sleep there, I had to get up again after I had laid down, and make a tolerably even surface by filling up the inequalities with articles from my own wardrobe. The mattress was full of knots, and what was in the thing that was intended to be my pillow I never ascertained.” An equally

62 Levin Smith Joynes, White Sulphur Springs, 21 August 1856, Section 6, Joynes Family Papers, VHS.
63 John Rossen, White Sulphur Springs, to Sister, Camden, South Carolina, 12 August 1849, GBA.
disgruntled neighbor informed Featherstonhaugh that his pillow was also lumpy and composed of "a handful or two of dirty live feathers" and the heads of two chickens and a duck. For a highly respected European scientist surveying the South's geology in the employ of the United States government, this simply would not do. Whatever the qualities of the natural scenery and mineral resources, Americans could not satisfy this gentleman's European standards of comfort.

But even these complaints paled next to the rants of one American, the Baltimore lawyer and railroad promoter John H.B. Latrobe, who found the cabin system at the Warm Springs most unsatisfying, with the "fleas numerous at all times." When he arrived at White Sulphur Springs Latrobe bunked down in a friend's cabin, but only "by dint of bribing the waiter and chambermaid." These servants provided Latrobe with "two benches, and a miserable pallet—a pillow and a blanket: sheets and a pillow case were out of the question. With these I was forced to be content for the first night, with the assurance that I was better off than any single man had been for three weeks. First, because I had got in, at all, and next, because I had secured such and admirable accommodations, the first night, for sleeping." A founder of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and leader of Baltimore society, Latrobe objected to his accommodations, being used to more genteel surroundings. He probably would have agreed with his fellow Baltimore lawyer Francis Scott

64 George William Featherstonhaugh, Excursion Through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices (London: John Murray, 1844), I: 55-56, 65. Charlene Lewis maintains that critics of springs architecture and landscape "were predominantly non-Southerners." Although outsiders like Featherstonhaugh voiced more vehement objections to the springs than did Southerners, numerous fervent critics came from with Southern society (Lewis, "Ladies and Gentlemen on Display," 111-112).
Key's line, "If you want to fare well, say farewell to the Springs." Yet he and thousands of others did not do either.

Eventually Latrobe’s protestations and connections finagled him “a cabin in ‘flea row’ so called here.” The room measured only fourteen by seven feet, and featured a floor which, “as you walk over it, sinks under your tread, and certain planks of which, you are warned not to tread on, lest you go through.” Terming the room a “nut shell,” he continued to complain about his cot.

“The foot is about 14 inches lower than the head, the iron pin of the lower legs having been lost; and the canvas sackens bottom has become unnailed in the middle, on one side, forming a valley into which at night, I have to cram all my spare clothes, so that my body may be on a level.” A warped, rickety table and two simple chairs supplied the only furnishings. To Latrobe’s surprise, “this establishment is the envy of some dozens of visitors, who are not half so well off.” Others shared Latrobe’s dissatisfaction with the fleas. As Frances Scott Key declared:

There’s an insect or two, called a flea here that stings
The skins of the people that come to the Springs.

Flea Row shared a dubious reputation with other cabins. Guests who were “young and foolish... [and] those “fond of noise and nonsense, frolic and fun, wine and wassail, sleepless nights, and days of headache” flocked to Wolf Row. Another less than luxurious group of cottages, Probation Row, housed

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65 Latrobe, “Odds and Ends” journal, 1832-1835, Box 4, John H.B. Latrobe Family Papers, Manuscripts Division, Maryland Historical Society [MdHS]; Francis Scott Key, “Lines on the White Sulphur Springs,” GBA. Printed versions of the poem distributed at Robert E. Lee Week at the Greenbrier Hotel, White Sulphur Springs in the 1950s omitted this line. The original line appears in Key’s manuscript.
66 Latrobe, “Odds and Ends” journal, MdHS.
67 Key, “Lines on the White Sulphur Springs,” GBA. Again, these lines were excluded from the official Greenbrier version of the poem.
families waiting for better accommodations. The least favorite of nearly every
guest was Compulsion Row, thus named by a family placed in an unfinished,
roofless cabin when there was no other room at the springs.69 These names
lacked the boosterism and regional pride of Alabama Row or South Carolina
Row and were certainly not the choice of the hotel’s proprietors; they
registered people’s dissatisfaction with the unrealized ideal of the springs’
pastoral design.

Wealthy Southerners shared these complaints, terming “the buildings
generally... mean, and built without taste and judgment,” and “exactly on a
par, as it regards style and appearance, with those of any common country
tavern.”70 The rustic accommodations provoked the Virginian W.J. Nivison
to wonder how anyone could spend more than a few days “amidst barrenness
and desolation.”71 Whether an elite Southerner like Nivison or Joynes, an
urban sophisticate like Latrobe or Key, or a foreign dignitary like
Featherstonhaugh, most visitors considered conditions at the Virginia
springs unacceptable. They preferred more comfortable accommodations and
failed to see the charm in the rustic setting. When Featherstonhaugh declared
that White Sulphur Springs “has very much the air of a permanent
Methodist camp-meeting,” he expressed elite Europeans’ and Americans’
dissatisfaction with the springs’ attainments. Just as Methodists seemed crude
and unsophisticated to the more formal Episcopalians and Presbyterians who
frequented the springs, so too were the accommodations and attempts at
architectural design below their standards. The cultural ideals of a

69 Featherstonhaugh, Excursion Through the Slave States, I: 55.
70 Crayon, Virginia Illustrated, 160; Levin Smith Joynes, Salt Sulphur Springs, to Mother, 9
August 1856, Section 6, Joynes Family Papers, VHS.
71 W.J. Nivison, Warm Springs, to John Nivison, Norfolk, 26 August 1813, Box 2, Nivison
Family Letters, Skipwith-Wilmer Papers, MdHS.
cosmopolitan, and partly urban, plantation elite clashed with the limited possibilities for refinement at the springs.

Wealthy guests deemed conditions at Saratoga’s hotels only slightly better than Virginia’s cabins; the hotels’ imposing facades belied a less than grand interior. Indeed, part of the piazzas’ popularity derived from the cramped conditions inside the hotels. Called “uncomfortable raw sorts of places” and “confined, ill-furnished, and inconvenient” by one Englishman, guests’ private bedrooms offered few amenities. Standard rooms measured only three feet wider than Virginia’s cabins, lacked wallpaper or carpeting, and contained window glass so thin that it was “apt to break with the slightest jar.”

Even the grander suites, at eighteen by twelve feet, were cramped for the families the proprietors hoped to attract. The rooms seemed minuscule even in comparison to the model middle-class drawing rooms recommended by the Beecher sisters, and the furnishings were quite modest. They included a wooden bedstead, one or two chairs, a dresser with a small mirror, a wash stand with bowl and pitcher, a small table, and a closet of wooden shelves surrounded by a calico curtain. Smaller, less prestigious hotels often placed only a bedstead, mattress, and wash basin in their rooms, resembling “those articles as seen in penitentiaries,” according to one wit.

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73 “Saratoga Springs, May, 1856” Broadside, Folder, 1855-1860, Box 2, Putnam Collection, NYSHA.
76 Union Hall Inventory, October 12, 1848, Folder, 1848-1849, and December 31, 1853, Folder 1850-1854, Box 1, Putnam Collection, NYSHA; Northern Hotel Inventory, May 18, 1844, Folder 18, Chattel Mortgages, 1833-1860, SSCH; Willis, *American Scenery*, I: 20.
rooms were, in the opinion of the British commentator James Silk Buckingham, "exceedingly small, those of Congress Hall especially, scantily provided, and altogether inferior to what the scale and style of the house, in other respects, would warrant the visitor to expect." Even prestigious guests like New York Governor William Seward lacked the space to write a letter in his room; he was forced to impose on a friend for space to perform this rudimentary task. Most visitors preferred to visit their rooms only at night to such an extent that the hotel corridors became "a passage where the tread of human feet is never intermitted, from sunrise to sunset." To amuse their guests, hotels built gracious piazzas and grand ballrooms below the lodging rooms, which forced guests to spend much of their time in public spaces. But even the coerced congeniality of common rooms failed to satisfy. As one British observer complained, "With all this show, there was still some want of keeping, and many symptoms of haste, in every thing, indicated chiefly by the absence of innumerable minor luxuries." Despite the hotel proprietors' best attempts at creating a comfortable atmosphere, their public spaces seemed "sacrificed to appearance." Elite New Yorkers and foreign visitors agreed that the hotels were "crowded beyond comfort, law, convenience, or conscience." They, like their Southern counterparts, expected a fashionable watering place to meet their cultural standards. But Saratoga's businessmen found it easier to skimp on construction costs than to satisfy their guests' sophisticated tastes.


78 Hall, Travels in North America, 24.

79 Buckingham, America, Historical, Statistical, and Descriptive, II: 444.

80 "Saratoga Springs," The Ariel IV, 11 (18 September 1830): 84.
The most pressing shortfall in both regions related to the springs’ physical arrangement, which inhibited social intercourse. Saratoga’s cramped hotels forced people into public spaces, while Virginia’s cabin system emphasized separate living for families or parties, where they could be “lords of their own castles.” With cabin rows stretched across acres of lawn, one British critic felt that visitors were “secluded from each other, and the whole arrangement unsocial.” More important than the layout, however, were the cabin interiors that forced people “to seek the common room, to get out of their own... wretched dog-wholes.” The design of a single room that served as both bedroom and parlor demonstrated the proprietors’ “no little ingenuity in promoting social intercourse.” In early national and antebellum society, where “we Americans are not yet in that pure state of Parisian innocence that we can visit a lady in her bedroom, without considerable—trepidation,” social meetings were pushed out of the cabins and onto the lawns or into the resort’s public rooms, where visitors conducted “the main life at the Springs.” Located in the central hotel building or the outlying dining or ball room structures, the parlors included “windows opening on the lawn, [with] lounges placed by them, on which you may loll at your ease, and see the gay groups pass to and fro, without the fatigue of joining them.” Yet even these accommodations for socializing failed to satisfy one Virginian, who complained that the “want of a good parlor is a very great drawback to...

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83 Paulding, Letters From the South, Written During An Excursion in the Summer of 1816 (New York: James Eastburn & Company, 1817), I: 232; James Alexander Seddon, White Sulphur Springs, to Charles Bruce, 12 August 1858, Folder 6, Section 8, Bruce Family Papers, VHS.
84 Windle, Life at the White Sulphur Springs, 25.
enjoyment and sociability."\textsuperscript{85} He and his fellow Southerners wanted public spaces that encouraged easy interaction. They regretted that without “large rooms where ladies and gentlemen can meet to exhibit themselves before dinner,” the belles lacked a place to display “the toils of dressing.”\textsuperscript{86} In going to the springs Southerners hoped to escape the stifling social strictures of their plantations and cities, where their every word and action needed to conform to the conventions of honor, race, gender, and class. But much to their dismay, the springs’ physical layout inhibited the very freedom they desired. While the springs’ outer appearance promised easy sociability and relative simplicity, the reality of their spatial structure rendered such exchanges nearly impossible.

The public spaces in Saratoga’s hotels offered a slight improvement by reserving the first floor for a combination of dining rooms, ball rooms, and parlors. To maximize their space, hotels divided the rooms with “folding doors which may be thrown open exhibiting a long and splendid area which may [be] used for dining [and] balls.” Usually the chairs and table from dinner had to be cleared from the multi-purpose room before the evening’s festivities could begin. One visitor even recalled having to wait for prayers to finish and the waiters to clear chairs before the “hop” dance commenced one evening at Union Hall.\textsuperscript{87} Using limited space for a variety of purposes allowed the proprietors of Saratoga’s hotels to offer a broad variety of activities without having to construct additional buildings. Their centralized organization—all a guest’s needs and a critical mass of visitors under a single

\textsuperscript{85} Levin Smith Joynes, White Sulphur Springs, 21 August 1856, Section 6, Joynes Family Papers, VHS.
\textsuperscript{86} Mary Thompson, White Sulphur Springs, to Mrs. Frances M. Lewis, Philadelphia, 26 August 1850, Folder 37, Box VII, Conway Whittle Family Papers, SWM.
\textsuperscript{87} Dwight, \textit{The Northern Traveler}, 106; Davison, \textit{Traveler’s Guide}, 142; Anon. journal, 14 August 1825, p. 4, NYSLA; Durkee, \textit{Reminiscences of Saratoga}, 70.
roof—encouraged a level of social interaction that the more diffuse Virginia cabin system could not achieve. Saratoga’s model of a developed village enjoyed one advantage that Virginia’s tourists envied: a physical structure that encouraged easy socializing.

But even with the advantages of a favorable layout, Saratoga proprietors (and their less fortunate Virginia counterparts) attempted to divert guests’ interest from the rustic lodgings by providing attractive outdoor settings. Saratoga’s proprietors astutely cultivated a park-like setting of manicured lawns and ornate shrubbery around the mineral springs. Dubbed Congress Park after the nearby hotel of the same name, it entertained guests with a wildly popular hand-powered circular railway and an Indian encampment. Realizing the benefits of providing a bucolic setting for passing the time, hotels expanded on the model of Congress Park and erected formal gardens behind their elaborate facades. These gardens, located within the hotel’s plot of land and surrounded by the building’s wings and out-buildings, formed a semi-courtyard where guests could stroll, talk, and appraise the society about them. What they lacked in natural scenery, Saratoga’s proprietors created. It worked well enough for one visitor to remark that “the grounds are kept in such beautiful order, that it is a pleasure to walk thro’ them.” 88

Even in Virginia, where the lodging deficiencies were much more glaring, the unhappy John H.B. Latrobe could admit that White Sulphur Springs’ efforts at cultivating scenery “makes up in picturesque effect” for the atrocious cabins. 89 Elite Americans from both North and South desired a carefully constructed and managed nature that they could easily observe. Their cultural ideal was Thomas Cole’s Hudson River Valley, not Lewis and Clark’s savage

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88 Ellen Bond diary, 29 July 1850, NYSLA.
89 Latrobe, “Odds and Ends” journal, MdHS.
West. Proprietors, always looking for ways to attract more guests, proved eager to appeal to these aesthetic standards.

They used the design of the mineral spring itself, often placed at the establishment’s geographic center, to advertise their resorts’ sophistication and cultural exclusiveness.\textsuperscript{90} White Sulphur Springs featured “a classical looking octagonal marble dome supported by columns below which is ‘the fountain’ in a large octagonal marble case,” complete with benches around the perimeter for the comfort of imbibers.\textsuperscript{91} Marble basins also enclosed the water at Blue Sulphur Springs and encased the waters at Red Sulphur Springs, the canopy of which was supported by twelve “Ionic” columns.\textsuperscript{92} Saratoga’s springs adopted a similar style of columned porticos, iron or wooden railings, and marble curbing surrounding the springs themselves.\textsuperscript{93}

The statuary atop the fountain pavilions reified the cultural pretensions and assumptions of springs society. Some, like the Red Sulphur Springs, chose to emphasize their wilderness setting by placing “a set of huge elk-horns” above the springs pavilion.\textsuperscript{94} But most of the Virginia resorts complemented the Greek revival architecture of their columned springs coverings with a marble statue of Hygeia, the Greek goddess of health. Again, White Sulphur Springs defined style. Its Hygeia held a cup in her right hand, as if preparing to drink, and in her left a vegetable or herb, perhaps representing the popularity of herbal medicine at the time and the curative

\textsuperscript{90} Mordecai, \textit{Description of the Album of Virginia}, 29.
\textsuperscript{91} P.G., White Sulphur Springs, to Elizabeth Greene, New York, 7 July 185[?], GBA; Featherstonhaugh, \textit{Excursion Through the Slave States}, I: 55.
\textsuperscript{93} There are far fewer descriptions of Saratoga’s fountains, with the majority devoted to the medicinal qualities of the waters. For an example of the brevity of this evidence, see Davison, \textit{The Traveller’s Guide}, 133.
\textsuperscript{94} “Virginia Springs,” \textit{SLM} III (May 1837): 282.
power of the spring. The image affirmed the drinkers' cultural sophistication—decoding the classical imagery marked a guest as educated and refined. Whether or not shrewd visitors could extend their analysis to explain the statue's commercial implications is unclear.

Whatever their powers of deconstruction, elite Americans discovered that the springs rarely met their ideal of cultivated landscapes and improved nature. Like the marble statue of Hygeia at White Sulphur Springs, the springs failed to achieve the cultural sophistication they symbolized: "Full of blue spots, she looks not like the personification of health, but a thing full of bruises. The features are good, but the arms are of patchwork, and the drapery looks to have been chopped out with a broad axe." This imperfect goddess, Virginia's ramshackle cabins, and the misleading facades of Saratoga's hotels belied the air of cultural refinement and social grace that the springs projected. Daily life at the springs complemented their bucolic settings only part of the time. At Saratoga "the roominess and liberal proportions of the Colonnade are one of those lies of architecture common to the hotels of this country." The lie was the mirage of cultural accomplishment, the elusive ideal of sophistication amidst rural splendor that springs proprietors promoted.

The gap between appearance and reality begs the question: if the springs failed to provide a bucolic and pastoral setting, offered miserable accommodations, and fell short of peoples' expectations, why did visitors keep coming? Quite simply, because they believed in the restorative power of

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95 "Journal of a Trip to the Mountain, Caves and Springs of Virginia," SLM IV (April 1838): 261; "Journal of a Trip to the White Sulphur Springs, August 1836," August 29, p. 17, GBA.
96 Beverly Tucker, Lee's Springs, to Lucy Ann Tucker, Bowling Green, Virginia, 21 August 1837, Box 47, Tucker-Coleman Collection, SWM.
97 Willis, American Scenery, I: 20.
the waters and their position as a cultural ideal of improved society and refined nature, springs visitors continued to suffer discomforts and disappointments. Roughing it was part of the allure of experiencing nature, and apparently trumped any reservations about poor accommodations or mediocre scenery. For old-line, plantation Southerners, the ability to withstand such hardships may have been a virtue. It signaled their carefree indolence that placed little emphasis on the creature comforts that acquisitive Yankees and mercantile Southerners valued so highly. The ability to guiltlessly enjoy leisure composed a part of the distinctive Southern identity that few Northerners shared or understood.98 People tried to imagine life at the springs as completely divorced from the acquisitive competition they experienced daily, but reality disagreed.

Americans, wrote the Northern social critic George William Curtis, “make it a principle to desert the city, and none less than the Americans know how to dispense with it. So we compromise by taking the city with us.”99 Springs visitors in both regions, a sophisticated group of wealthy Americans from plantations and cities, refused to completely abandon their cultural ideals, even while attending occasionally crude resorts based on the romantic landscapes and historical fables they idealized. Springs proprietors appealed to these ideals but failed to satisfy their clients. Yet the springs still attracted hordes of visitors each summer. “There must,” mused one of Saratoga’s confounded British visitors, “be some great attraction” to bring so

98 Bertelson, *The Lazy South*, 178-186; Woodward, “The Southern Ethic in a Puritan World”; Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 60-61. Nash quotes William Byrd’s earlier preference to sleep outdoors, instead of inside a planter’s house, during his 1728 expedition to the North Carolina frontier: “we took so much pleasure in that natural kind of Lodging.” Byrd further declared that “Mankind are the great Losers by the Luxury of Feather-Beds and warm apartments” (51).

many visitors to the springs "in spite of a hot sun, a sandy soil, and noisy hotels." From his cultural perspective, American springs lacked the perfectly refined scenery, accommodations, and architecture of his own country. But to an American, whether Northern or Southern, the contradiction between untamed nature and imperfect civilization mattered little. Americans went to the springs because they believed the waters would cure their ailments and because the resorts’ rusticity provided an excuse to do so. The springs provided a simpler, purifying, less materialistic alternative to everyday life in Jacksonian America that made rustic conditions acceptable. In an age when Americans held different views about leisure—Southerners reveled in it and Northerners felt the need to justify it on moral grounds—the poor conditions, historical associations, and aesthetic ideals of the springs may have legitimized the experience. By enduring poor conditions, Americans could insist that going to the springs was about health and simplicity, not luxury.

Chapter Three:
"Restless Anxiety": Medicine at the Springs

Valentine Seaman set out from his home in New York City during the summer of 1792 laden with flasks, vials, copper basins, tubes, and a variety of chemicals and reagents. Destined for Saratoga Springs in upstate New York, the young physician and aspiring scientist hoped to make his professional mark by analyzing the settlement’s mineral water and validating its claims to medical utility. A recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania’s medical school, Seaman remembered the final lecture of Benjamin Rush, his esteemed professor, and Rush’s admonition to seek out any promising remedy in the undiscovered pharmacopoeia of the American wilderness:

"'Who knows but what at the foot of the Allegheny mountain there blooms a flower, that is an infallible cure for the epilepsy? Perhaps on the Monongahela, or the Potowmack, there may grow a root, that shall supply, by its tonic power, the invigorating effects of the savage or military life, in the cure of consumption.'" But more than just flowers and roots held medical promise. Seaman extended Rush’s musings to wonder why “there may not spring up a water, in some neglected valley, whose solvent quality, may melt down the torturing stone, or whose penetrating influence may root out the scrofula from the system?” Saratoga Springs provided Seaman with the opportunity to contribute to medical knowledge, possibly aid in the cure of various diseases, and make a name for himself.

1 Valentine Seaman, A Dissertation on the Mineral Waters of Saratoga; Containing, A Topographical Description of the Country, and the Situation of the Springs; An Analysis of the...
Seaman’s story encapsulates many of the major themes of the medical history of America’s mineral springs. Steeped in folk wisdom and local reputation, springs in both New York and Virginia gained a regional or national reputation for their medicinal qualities in the early years of the new republic. Prominent physicians and scientists, often aided or enlisted by springs proprietors, boosted these claims with analyses of the springs’ mineral contents and their medical applicability. Trained at many of the same medical schools in America’s or Britain’s leading cities, these physicians helped forge a national medical consensus. While conferring legitimacy on the springs, their reports also marked an important development in medical and scientific knowledge. They entered into the ongoing debate over medical respectability between the competing therapeutic sects during the first half of the nineteenth century. In addition, they contributed to the growing body of knowledge of American science, part of a national goal to establish the legitimacy of American scholarship by classifying and understanding the country’s natural resources. By identifying American springs and defining their components, physicians and promoters placed the country’s resorts on a par with European spas, and helped initiate the cultural independence that America’s struggling elite desired. Scientific and medical knowledge about the springs improved the nation and its citizens.

But the scientific and political significance of analyses like Seaman’s tell only part of the story. They were read by a broad audience in both regions that included everyone from physician-scientists to shopkeepers and “ladies,” who responded to the texts in ways that might have surprised their authors.

Waters, as Made Upon the Spot, Together with Remarks on Their Use in Medicine, and a Conjecture Respecting their Natural Mode of Formation; Also, a Method of Making an Artificial Mineral Water, Resembling that of Saratoga, both in Sensible Qualities and in Medicinal Virtue (New York: Samuel Campbell, 1793), v-vi.
In an age of medical uncertainty and therapeutic diversity, the springs offered just one more option for invalids. Individuals took the waters with a considerable degree of caution and acted as their own physicians. They read and evaluated medical studies with the intention of making informed decisions about their own therapies. The publication of mineral springs analyses, intended at first to legitimize the waters and solidify the medical establishment, actually democratized the cure and undermined the medical elite. Despite the efforts of men like Seaman to elevate mineral springs, they failed to place the waters at the forefront of American medicine. More refreshing beverages than powerful panaceas, America’s mineral waters never attained the curative power and medical acceptance for which their promoters hoped. Instead, they helped cure some of the social ailments that afflicted Northern and Southern society.

Seaman’s analysis of the springs was not the first study of upstate New York’s mineral springs. Two earlier studies preceded his, but neither claimed to be authoritative or comprehensive. One, by an army surgeon, Samuel Tenney, attempted to fill the gap between practice and science that limited the water’s usefulness, but made only tentative suggestions about the efficacy of the waters in cases in which traditional medicine had failed. He suggested

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using the waters as a general tonic to "brace up, and invigorate those patients, who are debilitated." Seaman, however, envisioned a loftier goal for his work. He dedicated the study to Robert R. Livingston, a prominent New York jurist and politician, as well as the President of the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures, for Livingston’s role in the “promotion of useful knowledge.” Seaman sought to add to that body of useful knowledge by curing diseases through his research. In the early republic, science needed to be utilitarian to be acceptable; simple theoretical advances were insufficient. With this caveat in mind Seaman employed the latest scientific techniques to analyze the waters and “to discover the nature of such mineral substances, as are often dissolved in it, and to which many waters owe their particular medical virtues.”

In pursuing his goal of discovering productive knowledge, Seaman incorporated the most recent scientific and medical methods of late eighteenth-century America into his dissertation. He described his experiments in great detail and justified all of his conclusions with a combination of empirical data and logical reasoning. No detail, including the water’s taste and temperature, escaped his analysis. Seaman set two goals for his project: to determine the contents of the water and the quantity of each chemical element. He hoped, by conducting a series of experiments, to ascertain the water’s exact contents and link them to cures for specific ailments. First, he tested the gas that emanated from the spring by lowering a candle, chicken, and kitten into the cone’s atmosphere, but each died from the noxious fumes. Seaman combined these data with other tests, including the

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local practice of using the water to make bread without yeast, to conclude that the gas in Saratoga’s spring water possessed significant powers and was different from mundane well water. To identify these powers, Seaman attempted to classify the water’s components.⁵

He proceeded to test a sample of the water with the satchel of reagents he carried with him from New York. Repeated experiments with the standard tests for certain substances revealed that the water contained three salts, an alkali, and a small amount of sulphur. Seaman reported that after all of these tests the water tasted about the same as before, although it made him a bit nauseous. But with these results, his task was only half done; Seaman still needed to determine the exact quantities of each of the components. After a series of distillations, filtrations, and evaporations, Seaman concluded that the water contained five important ingredients: cretaceous acid, common marine salt, aerated lime, and small traces of mineral alkali and aerated iron.⁶ In late eighteenth-century science, this was a significant accomplishment. But even though one of Seaman’s contemporaries considered the chemical analysis of mineral waters “one of the most difficult investigations in chemistry,” simply knowing the contents and their quantities was not enough.⁷ If Seaman was to achieve his goal of producing useful knowledge, he would have to show that the five elements contributed to the water’s medical utility.

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⁵ Seaman, A Dissertation on the Mineral Waters of Saratoga, 16-18.
⁶ Seaman, A Dissertation on the Mineral Waters of Saratoga, 19-29.
⁷ Peter Vandervoort, A Tretis on the Analisis of Ballston Mineral Spring Water (Johnstown, New York: Jacob Dockstader, 1795), 3; William Meade, An Experimental Enquiry in the Chemical Properties and Medicinal Qualities of the Principal Mineral Waters of Ballston and Saratoga, in the State of New York. With Directions for the Use of those Waters in the Various Diseases to which they are applicable; and observations on diet and regimen. To which has been added an Appendix, containing a chemical analysis of the Lebanon Spring in the State of New York (Philadelphia: Harrison Hall, 1817), xv.
Seaman’s experiments conformed to the prevailing scientific paradigm of his time, which sought to identify and classify nature’s component parts, while looking for utilitarian benefits from the new knowledge. His chemistry followed the cutting-edge theories of the French chemist Antoine Lavoisier, who broke compounds down into their constituent parts. Successful chemistry reduced elements and then recombined them, with the goal of discovering useful applications of the compounds in the process. In performing his experiments, Seaman was part of a community of generalists, scientists, and physicians who frequently crossed into each other’s field of study. Learned societies like the American Philosophical Society or the American Academy for Arts and Sciences admitted scholars, physicians, and gentlemen, so long as they exhibited an interest in knowledge, and medical schools included subjects as diverse as chemistry, natural history, mineralogy, and anatomy in their curriculum. Most chemists in the early republic actually received their training in medical school and devoted only a portion of their time to chemical inquiries. In this age, the gentleman scholar prevailed, making Seaman’s amalgamation of chemistry and medicine perfectly acceptable to most of his colleagues. His interest in the springs marked him as a member of the intellectual, as well as social, elite.8

Ironically, Seaman, the physician and surgeon, worked with firmer data in making his chemical conclusions than in his medical experiments. In the medical section of his text, Seaman moved away from the exhaustive, well-documented experiments of his chemical analysis. Working without an established medical record from his own observations or those of a reputable

physician at the springs, Seaman relied instead on general knowledge, folk experience, and the accepted properties of the water’s mineral contents to determine its medical utility. He wrote that in general the springs helped a variety of diseases. According to conventional wisdom, two of its contents, cretaceous acid and aerated alkali, aided “stone and gravely complaints,” and the presence of sea salt helped cure scrofula. Seaman failed to provide any detailed information on the medical qualities of the springs, substituting instead a general statement that patients should be careful when using the springs, and that the waters were generally harmless to most stomachs. His grand contribution to the body of knowledge was scientific, not medical.9 But in the age of classification, useful knowledge, and generalists, it conformed with contemporary standards.

Rather than making the definitive statement on American mineral springs, Seaman’s dissertation only sparked a deluge of additional studies. In the quarter century after the 1793 publication of his initial work, nine additional pamphlets, articles, or books analyzing Saratoga and Ballston Springs, and four works studying the Virginia springs, appeared (see Appendix A). Seaman pioneered the chemical analysis of American springs, but he merely followed a pattern long established at English spas, where the competition to prove the medical legitimacy of mineral waters through chemistry was even sharper than in the United States. Indeed, Seaman and his contemporaries followed a model established by their English counterparts: a detailed chemical study succeeded by generic, often anecdotal, medical recommendations.10 Many simply recycled other authors’ earlier

9 Seaman, A Dissertation on the Mineral Waters of Saratoga, 32-35.

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studies and added personal observations on the taste and medical efficacy of
the waters or the social setting at the springs. Despite Seaman’s exhaustive
experiments, the most pressing scientific controversy regarding Saratoga was
not chemical, but geological. It centered on the origins of the crack in the High
Rock cone, which authors attributed to either an earthquake, fallen tree, or
deterioration of the calcareous matter around the spring. That Seaman, a
physician by training, engaged in this debate speaks to the inchoate status of
American science in the early republic.

Not everyone was impressed with Seaman’s work. One study initiated a
quarrel over the validity of Seaman’s work and refocused the energies of
chemists and physicians studying the springs. Robert Livingston, the same
man to whom Seaman had dedicated his dissertation, carried some bottled
Saratoga water to Paris in 1807, where a French chemist analyzed it. The
results, published in a leading periodical, differed considerably from
Seaman’s: they found a larger quantity of gas and muriate of lime present.11
The difference mattered because it challenged Seaman’s chemistry and
implied different medical benefits from the waters than those posited by
Seaman. Disturbed by the disparagement of his own research, Seaman
repeated his analysis of the waters to “settle the difference” between the
studies and “for the more important purpose of ascertaining what, in truth,
are their real contents.” Published in the same issue of the journal as the
French analysis, Seaman reaffirmed his earlier analysis with some
modifications, and directly challenged his rival’s experiments. He then

11 The report was printed several times. See Medical Repository, Second Hexade, V (1808),
241-215; The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review V (1808): 58-59; American Medical and
Philosophical Register I (1811): 40-42; David Hosack, Observations on the Ballston Waters
pressed on to publish the new information in an expanded second edition of his 1793 dissertation.\textsuperscript{12}

More than a difference in test results motivated Seaman in writing the new edition. He had established himself as a prominent New York City physician and medical author since the publication of his first dissertation, when he was only twenty-two years old. Besides holding the eminent position of surgeon at New York Hospital, Seaman also had made important contributions in the advancement and acceptance of vaccinations. Any indictment of his reputation, even of experiments carried out years before in his career's infancy, threatened both his own interests and those of the medical profession in general.\textsuperscript{13} But in this context, Seaman did little to revise his earlier work. The book was ninety pages longer, but much of this additional length came from the smaller page dimensions, larger print, and wider margins. The new information included praise for Seaman's own work in vaccination and minor emendations throughout the text. He forcefully made the point, however, that "the French account is greatly exaggerated." Its calculations grossly overestimated the amount of carbonic acid, and Seaman's new experiments failed to confirm the presence of muriate of lime, information he had already published. Seaman claimed to have updated his analysis by using the latest scientific methods and revised his earlier conclusions on the actual contents of the water. Once completed, he considered the matter settled. His experiments were neither incorrect, "nor

\textsuperscript{12} Medical Repository, Second Hexade, V (1808), 253-256. For a full account of the controversy surrounding the various analyses of Saratoga's waters, see Henry E. Sigerest, "The Early Medical History of Saratoga Springs," Bulletin of the History of Medicine XIII (May 1943): 540-584.

\textsuperscript{13} Seaman's publications included An Account of the Epidemic Yellow Fever as it appeared in New York in 1795 (1796), and The Midwives Monitor and Mothers Mirror (1800); John Harley Warner, The Therapeutic Perspective: Medical Practice, Knowledge, and Identity in America, 1820-1885 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 12-16.
will any experiments yet published, warrant us in concluding that they contain any thing else.”

Seaman felt that he had finally issued the definitive word on Saratoga Springs, but others disagreed. The first review of his new work appeared shortly and spared no criticism. It faulted Seaman for succumbing to the inclination of many authors “to magnify the favourite objects of their research” beyond their actual importance: his sketch of the High Rock cone appeared too dramatic and overdone, resembling Italy’s Mt. Vesuvius more than the actual object. In the context of nationalistic science, when Americans were attempting to prove the superiority of their own natural resources and the legitimacy of their learned institutions, this was a serious charge. The co-authored review further criticized Seaman’s refutation of the French analysis on the basis of scientific theory. The reviewers wished that “Dr. S. had endeavoured to settle it by actual experiment; for it ought to be remembered, that mere reasoning can never decide a matter of fact.” His experiments attracted comment as well; they were “no better than his reasoning, there being an evident fallacy in both.” According to the reviewers, Seaman would have been better off proposing tentative hypotheses instead of firm conclusions. They correctly surmised that Seaman had not revisited the spring for his experiments, but the reviewers missed a key error. In re-issuing his analysis Seaman increased the amount of water he tested from one quart to ten pounds—a factor of five. Amazingly, the amounts for each component in the water also increased five times. There was, in fact, little significant new scientific information in Seaman’s second edition. Overall, the work contributed a valuable stimulus to public discussion and general knowledge,

but, according to the critics, "the man of science assuredly cannot drink deep" from Seaman's well.¹⁵ The controversy surrounding Seaman's work addressed more than the exact quantities of various chemicals or scientific protocol. It exposed the bitter rivalries between scientists and the lack of a clear consensus on methodology. Few of the early republic's gentleman scholars could agree on what constituted good science.

With no clear resolution, the controversy continued to rage. Never one to shrink from a good argument, Seaman responded in a journal that had reviewed his book positively.¹⁶ He addressed the reviewers' criticisms, offering precise and lengthy refutations of each. Seaman's main objection lay in the shoddy nature of the review. In his opinion, "the criticisms indeed seem well calculated to amuse the passing reader who has not had an opportunity of knowing anything of chemistry himself." The reviewers failed to take the work seriously, and missed an opportunity to enlighten the scientific community with Seaman's important discoveries. Furthermore, the reviewers discounted the eminent chemists cited by Seaman. These gentlemen, like Seaman, "used to toil and dig deep for their facts, while these modern adepts, with unsoiled hands, seem to flourish about, upon the high ground of science, with all imaginable ease." Seaman included a letter addressed to the two editors of the offending journal that sarcastically insisted they could never have written the negative review because of their renowned scientific reputations, personal integrity, and familiarity with the springs. He

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¹⁶ Medical Repository Third Hexade, I, 1 (May, June, and July, 1809): 57-66. The review included a seven-page excerpt from Seaman's work.

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attacked his critics on the same basis that they faulted him: for not meeting scientific standards and failing to act like gentlemanly scholars.  

The journal printed Seaman’s reply, but omitted the closing letter that subtly attacked the editors as “frivolous and unworthy of notice.” The editors insisted that Seaman’s tone was unwarranted and that he should have restricted his comments to scientific matters and submitted them to their journal, where the controversy could be handled judiciously and discreetly. Instead, Seaman’s actions “deviated from the path of propriety” in their “unjustified insinuations,” and were a “breach of decorum.” Only by publishing honest, rational reviews could the journal maintain its integrity and serve its readers. Readers perusing the journal wanted “not only a general account of the contents of the work under examination, but also a decided opinion concerning its character and value. Without this the review is of little use.” In other words, Seaman had no right to complain just because he had received a negative review. The original reviewers publish a one-page rebuttal that called Seaman’s reply “rude and reprehensible.” Even worse, Seaman’s dissertation was “worthless, so far as it relates to the analysis of the water.” Despite their torrent of criticism, the reviewers still found Seaman’s topic worthy of study. They wished for “some chemist of competent abilities to give us a complete and satisfactory analysis of these celebrated waters.”

In this fight over scientific paradigms, standards, and methodologies, as well as reputations and egos, one faction of the quarreling New York City medical community quashed the attempts of a rival to refute its experiments and

18 New-York Medical and Philosophical Journal and Review II, 1 (1810): 142-144, 176-175.
claims to authority. But they still agreed on the utility of analyzing mineral waters and their potential medical benefits.19

With Seaman's study cast aside, the contested French chemist's report became the model for subsequent studies of the springs, including David Hosack's influential *Observations on the Ballston Waters*. Unlike his predecessors, Hosack spent less time discussing the actual analysis of the waters than detailing their potential medical uses. Hosack, a prominent New York City physician, college instructor, and naturalist who must have known Seaman from the city's small intellectual circles, had "no doubt, from the sensible effects produced upon the [patient's] system by the waters themselves, that they are also productive of great good in a variety of diseases." He listed a series of diseases treatable by the waters, with the caveat that "the directions of the physicians are indispensibly necessary." Like any other part of the *materia medica*, wrote this pillar of the medical establishment, mineral waters were subject to mis-application and abuse by patients and should be used carefully.20 In this prescription Hosack was interposing his authority, and that of the medical establishment in general, between the invalid and the mineral waters. He acted to affirm the physician's position as the ultimate arbiter of medical decisions and to relegate the patient to a passive role. Having already defeated internal opponents like Seaman, Hosack and the medical establishment moved to consolidate their authority over patients.

Hosack's prescriptions agreed with the recommendations of his contemporaries who studied other American springs. Therapeutic conventions transcended geographic region, as medical studies of the

Virginia springs adhered to the same general principles and advised the use of waters in the same set of diseases as did their Northern counterparts. The course of therapy preferred by America's early springs physicians was not radical, but conformed with the general practices of mainstream medicine during the early republic. The most basic theory on the use of the springs, that they elevated debilitated systems, agreed with the prevailing medical understanding that diseases were caused by either excited or depressed systems, and that the physician's main task was to reverse the body's state and produce a cure. The waters, in effect, acted as a tonic. Springs physicians also prescribed drugs, applied blisters, and bled their patients as a prelude to, or part of, mineral water therapy, just as their contemporaries did. In an age when the prevailing medical paradigm called for the physician to produce an immediate, observable effect on the patient's body, mineral waters fell within the requirements of an appropriate treatment. Drinking six to eight pints of mineral water before breakfast and as many as a dozen more during the day certainly qualified as a "heroic" treatment, especially when springs visitors made exaggerated claims that some guests quaffed as many as 54 glasses of water in a single day. The point of such outlandish estimates was not to provide an accurate count of glasses drunk, but to demonstrate the extremes to which invalids would go in search of a cure.


22 Warner, The Therapeutic Perspective, 1, 11-12, 17-19; James E. Cassedy, Medicine in America: A Short History (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 24-25; A Tour to New Connecticut in 1811: The Narrative of Henry Leavitt Edwards, ed. Phillip R. Shriver (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1985), 85. The average dose seems to be around twelve glasses per day, still a significant amount.
Once patients drank the water they generally moved their bowels, a topic of frequent conversation at the springs, “in sufficient time for breakfast.” For guests who ate prodigious meals at a rapid rate this was not an undesired effect; it cured their indigestion. St. George Tucker’s comment that “this morning I had one of the most bilious discharges I ever had in my life” indicated not only that the waters produced the desired result, but also that the outcome was extraordinary. The fact that springs visitors discussed the water’s effects so openly indicates a willingness to share personal medical information in hopes of attaining a cure. In this case, the springs broke down the societal taboo concerning bodily functions. By telling friends and family how well the springs worked patients validated the waters according to prevailing medical assumptions. More than a simple laxative, the waters caused “copious discharges,” which qualified them as a legitimate treatment with observable results. In the context of early American medicine, prescribing or taking the waters was not a revolutionary act that undermined the medical establishment; the waters composed part of the regular physician’s arsenal of weapons used to combat disease.

Because the waters fit so well within the prevailing therapeutic paradigm, physicians saw both the medical and commercial possibilities of mineral waters from the earliest years of springs history. They proposed recreating the waters away from the springs and establishing a new market for their curative powers. Even the grandfather of springs analysis, Valentine

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23 Christopher C. Jenkins, Saratoga Springs, to Mrs. Jenkins, Charleston, South Carolina, 13 July 1826, Christopher C. Jenkins Papers, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University [Duke]; Saint George Tucker Coalter, Salt Sulphur Springs, to Judith Coalter, 29 July 1836, Folder 40, Box IV, Brown, Coalter, Tucker Papers, Manuscripts Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary [SWM]; *Wilson’s Illustrated Guide to the Hudson River* (New York: H. Wilson, 1848), 58.
Seaman, included, in his initial study, a proposal to add various chemicals to ordinary water. In his opinion, his artificial water was "acknowledged by several persons who had drank of the Saratoga waters, perfectly to resemble them in taste." To verify the water’s authenticity, Seaman performed a chemical analysis which confirmed that the artificial water contained the same ingredients as actual Saratoga water, as determined by his initial analysis. His reasoning may have been circular, but Seaman could now claim that his experiment "leaves no doubt, but that [the artificial water] must possess the same medicinal virtues [as real Saratoga water]." Reconstituting the waters was a significant scientific accomplishment. But more importantly, in the eyes of mineral water entrepreneurs, it also allowed people to derive medical benefits from the waters "without the inconvenience or expense of attending at the spring." They envisioned a lucrative new market for artificial water. Scientists in both New York and Virginia hoped that by recreating the water "Every Town or State could be enabled to supply their cachectic [sic] and consumptive patients with these salubrious waters, at a small expense, through united aid and contributions of charity and humanity." The promoters suggested various methods of imitating mineral waters, from impregnating water with carbonic acid gas to pouring water over simulated strata of the appropriate minerals. The latter method seemed especially promising because chemists might manipulate the exact contents of the waters as they suited specific diseases. By recreating the mineral waters


of different springs scientists could improve on nature and contribute to the progress of humanity by eradicating disease. Doing so would prove the value of America’s natural resources to the world by satisfying Benjamin Rush’s nationalistic search for American medicines, as well as establish the utility and credibility of the scientific-medical establishment.

This new avenue of scientific inquiry attracted several entrepreneurs and adventurers. Among them was Benjamin Silliman, a recently appointed professor of chemistry at Yale College, who hoped to contribute something to the general body of knowledge, as well as supplement his meager income, by producing artificial mineral waters on a grand scale. His initial attempts stalled in 1806 due to his inability to produce water in large quantities, but Silliman persisted. By 1808 he had perfected the production of waters and opened a fountain room in New York City. People enjoyed the waters and prominent physicians endorsed their use, but no profits flowed into Silliman’s hands. Writing after Silliman’s experiments, Valentine Seaman agreed that imitation water aided the cure of various diseases and that several New York establishments “tolerably well imitated” the waters. But he added a caveat that the waters were a powerful medicine and should only be used by the ill, not by the fashionable who desired a pleasant, refreshing beverage. Although critics disagreed with Seaman and urged a wider use of the waters, the distance between science and commerce was one that Benjamin Silliman happily maintained. As a gentleman and scientist, he would not descend into the base world of aggressive commerce. Outmaneuvered by his competitors who readily marketed their artificial waters to anyone willing to drink them,
as well as by technical glitches, Silliman abandoned the business after just two seasons.26

Silliman’s venture failed in part because of his reluctance to envision science as a purely commercial endeavor and enter the market wholeheartedly, but his competitors soon met a similar fate. By 1820 several businessmen began bottling Saratoga’s Congress Spring water for transportation and sale to urban markets.27 The success of this effort, as well as similar bottling operations initiated at several Virginia springs in the late 1830s, ended the artificial mineral water business. If consumers could drink the real thing from a bottle, they had little need for chemically altered generic water dispensed from a tap, whose medical value remained untested. The combination of science and medicine fell apart when faced with competition from the synergy of business and medicine.

The demise of artificial waters coincided with another significant change in the history of mineral waters. In 1817 Valentine Seaman, the father of the scientific study of the mineral waters and their medical utility, died of consumption. That same year another physician published a new work on Saratoga Springs that altered the approach to studying the springs and became the standard, as well as immensely popular, medical treatise on the subject for years to come.28 John H. Steel’s An Analysis of the Mineral Waters of Saratoga and Ballston reads much differently from the efforts of his predecessors. Where Seaman’s generation focused on the chemical

components of the springs, with short digressions into their medical efficacy, the second phase of springs studies placed increased emphasis on the springs’ medical uses for the invalids who flocked to the resorts. This is not to say that earlier authors were not interested in the commercial or medical prospects of the springs, but that they included such information as a corollary to their scientific studies. In the later publications, medical efficacy and tourist information moved to the foreground and science faded into the background. In two decades springs publications moved from scientific analysis to business and social information. This content shift mirrored the move from professional to lay medical knowledge.

Steel’s book was the first springs-related publication, aside from guidebooks, to include extensive information on the history, geology, and attractions of the general area. His goal was not to engage in a contentious scientific debate, but to “enable invalids, as well as men of pleasure, to make such arrangements, before visiting the Spring, as may be conducive to their comforts and pleasures while there.” He basically combined the two leading genres of springs publications, the medical study and guidebook. In doing so, Steel did not bother to reproduce the numerous chemical analyses of the springs. Instead, he named the leading authors, assuming that “from the weight of such authority, the most scrupulous will be satisfied that the medical properties of these waters are entirely owing” to the components identified by the prominent authorities. Steel still performed a variety of experiments on the mineral water, but used them as supporting evidence for his general argument, rather than the central focus of the entire work.29

What set Steel's study apart from earlier works was his appeal to readers not as a leading scientist from an intellectual and urban center, but as a local physician experienced in the use of the waters as a medical agent. He foregrounded this information on the title page of the second edition of his book, where he called himself not only "John H. Steel, M.D.," but also "Resident at the Springs, President of the Saratoga Medical Society." The two other general studies of Saratoga Springs followed the trend by identifying the authors as resident physicians. To these men, local knowledge mattered more than scientific theory. Likewise, virtually every study of the Virginia springs identified the author as at least a physician, and in many cases as the resident physician of the spring under consideration. The authors apparently used these titles to claim legitimacy and the respect of their readers, although some went a bit far in their pretensions. Thomas D. Mütter's 1840 publication was titled simply, *The Salt Sulphur Springs, Monroe County, Virginia*, but identified the author as "M.D., Lecturer on Surgery; Corresponding Member of the N.Y. Medical and Surgical Society; Fellow of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia; Member of the Pathological Society of Philadelphia; Member of the Acad. of Nat. Sciences of Philadelphia; Hon. Member of the Medical Society of Philadelphia; One of the Physicians to the Philadelphia Dispensary; One of the Council of the Historical Society, &c." Besides parading credentials to impress readers, such lists also identified the author as a regular physician, not an adherent of one

of the many medical sects that populated antebellum medicine. By looking at the title page of a medical work, an invalid could quickly determine if the author shared his or her therapeutic outlook and decide whether the tract was worth reading or buying. Authors also benefited by solidifying their ties to the profession and marginalizing those practitioners who failed to follow the accepted norms of regular medicine. In an age of medical competition and disagreement over the proper role of patients in their own treatment, invalids could choose among Thompsonians, who advocated the use of herbs and other natural remedies; homeopaths, who prescribed infinitesimal amounts of medication; the heroic treatments of regular physicians; and the water-cure. Guidebook authors naturally sought to distinguish themselves from rivals. To stress professional medical credentials was to identify the text as conservative in therapeutics and authoritarian in its conception of the physician’s role. More than just honorific, a title signified the author’s place in the politics of antebellum medicine.32

Medical studies of the springs published after 1817 shared more than an affinity for titles. They also agreed on the emerging medical concept of specificity—the idea that each disease required a discrete course of treatment, and a major intellectual development in the history of medicine. The identification of certain diseases with individual springs was not an isolated phenomenon, but part of the growing therapeutic trend. Specificity held that each individual disease and patient required a different therapy, depending on the variables of age, sex, race, wealth, moral status, and geographic region. Individual cases mattered more than universal prescriptions or theoretical bases for treatments, as principal springs physicians acknowledged by their

insistence that each patient consult a doctor to determine the best course of
treatment for his or her ailment. Detailed knowledge of individual patients
and appropriate therapeutics increased the importance of local physicians,
especially those resident at the springs. Specificity, with its emphasis on local
experience and individual circumstance, suited an increasingly decentralized,
democratic society like early nineteenth-century America well. But its
development was not limited to Saratoga or the Virginia springs. Specificity
gained credence at roughly the same time at the predominant spa in the
Anglo-American world, Bath, England. The publication of so many medical
studies of American springs, complete with detailed recommendations for
proper use to cure individual diseases, spoke to this new therapeutic doctrine
and the gradual loosening of the authoritarian doctor-patient relationship in
the Anglo-Atlantic world.\textsuperscript{33} By following this trend physicians and patients
identified themselves as part of a cosmopolitan trans-Atlantic elite.

Earlier studies alluded to the connection between the exact content of a
spring and its efficacy in certain diseases, but never went beyond general
prescriptions. In the first stage of medical development physicians made only
general connections, refusing to "attribute to mineral waters of any
description any very exclusive property which cannot be shown by chemical
analysis."\textsuperscript{34} Only with the advent of more sophisticated chemical techniques
and additional data from springs patients were medical authors able to begin
making direct links between disease and spring. For instance, John Steel
discovered that the mineral springs of Saratoga and Ballston, all located
within ten miles of each other, contained the same general list of ingredients,

\textsuperscript{33} Warner, \textit{The Therapeutic Perspective}, 58-72; George D. Kersley, \textit{Bath Water: The Effect of
\textsuperscript{34} Hosack, \textit{Observations on the Use of the Ballston Waters}, 5-6; Meade, \textit{An Experimental
Enquiry}..., 109; Seaman, \textit{A Dissertation on the Mineral Waters of Saratoga} (1809), 87-91;
but in slightly different quantities. Steel’s accomplishment came from his realization that the “difference in the quantities of the substances common to all” determined the applicability of each individual spring to various diseases. On this basis he recommended the best uses of thirteen different springs in the area.35

Perhaps because of their isolation among the mountains of the western part of the state and their widespread location across several hundred square miles, direct ties between the Virginia springs and individual diseases came more slowly. These springs, which began as local retreats steeped in folk wisdom, were slow to adopt the market-oriented dissemination of their virtues. But by the late 1830s and early 1840s, several medical guides to the Virginia springs emerged, complete with a list of the various resorts and the diseases they aided.36 Specificity transcended region.

This trend increased with the appearance of a new genre that focused on a single spring or resort rather than a region. At least fourteen such publications (eleven for Virginia, three for Saratoga) appeared after 1834, a process that coincided with the publication of what most contemporaries considered the seminal work on the mineral waters of the United States, John Bell’s comprehensive study of the medical uses of American mineral

35 Steel, An Analysis of the Mineral Waters of Saratoga and Ballston, 25, 44-78. Subsequent editions (at least four under two different titles) included additional information for newly discovered springs and slight modifications to his previous recommendations.

36 The earliest and briefest was George Hayward, Remarks on Some of the Medicinal Springs of Virginia (Boston: D. Clapp, 1839). Longer, more comprehensive guides include: William Burke, The Mineral Springs of Western Virginia: With Remarks on Their Use, and the Diseases to Which They are Applicable (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1842); John J. Moorman, The Virginia Springs. With Their Analysis; and Some Remarks on their Character. Together with a Directory for the Use of the White Sulphur Water, and an Account of the Diseases to Which it is Applicable (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1847). Burke issued a second edition in 1853, as did Moorman in 1855. Later editions of Moorman followed in 1857 and 1859. His 1867 and 1873 editions, titled Mineral Springs of North America, included information on mineral springs from across the United States in a text that exceeded 500 pages in length.
springs. The new generation of studies had little trouble getting into print, but their authors found that they needed to leave the springs for a major urban center to be published. All but three of the fourteen springs studies (78.6 percent) were issued by presses in large cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, or publishers in the state capitals, Albany and Richmond. While writing studies that decentralized medicine and insisted on the primacy of local experience and the specificity of disease treatment, authors turned to the nation’s publishing and intellectual centers, its major cities, to disseminate their claims. The springs, as elite institutions that were part of the market economy, relied on the nation’s cultural centers.

These individual springs studies carried the doctrine of specificity to its fullest extent. They focused on the medical efficacy of a single spring for a single disease. This strategy often backfired, as nearly every spring could claim its power in cases of dyspepsia and bilious complaints. But only Virginia’s Red Sulphur Springs could boast that it cured consumption. Three different pamphlets, more individual studies than for any other spring, promoted the Red’s power to clear congested lungs, lower the pulse, and act as a general purgative. Physicians determined that the specific composition of the water’s red sulphurous precipitate acted as "the principal medicinal agent." Although the various doctors issued caveats regarding individual cases and the need to consult physicians, they boldly endorsed the Red Sulphur Springs as the best and only cure for troublesome illnesses like consumption and tuberculosis.


38 The exceptions were an imprint by Saratoga’s local newspaperman and springs publisher Gideon Davison, and two 1850s studies of the Virginia springs published by a newspaper office and a small printer in the western part of the state, both located in important sub-regional centers (see Appendices A and B).

39 William Burke, Red Sulphur Springs, Monroe County, Virginia (Wytheville, Virginia: D.A. St. Clair, 1857), 9; Henry Huntt, A Visit to the Red Sulphur Springs of Virginia, During the
Specificity allowed Red Sulphur Springs to use science to its business advantage.

These increasingly specific studies relied on two basic pieces of evidence to bolster their claims of medical utility: chemical analyses and patient testimonials. The use of chemical analysis that Valentine Seaman established in 1793 held throughout the antebellum period, as every mineral springs study either made mention of previous chemical analyses of the springs or conducted their own new experiments. Northern and Southern authors still listed key ingredients as part of the materia medica, a central claim in their promotional efforts. The Commonwealth of Virginia considered the springs' chemical components of such significance that it required sixteen of twenty-six springs incorporated between 1835 and 1850 to analyze their waters and publish the results "for the benefit of the community."

The state geologist even devoted a significant amount of his time and portions of his annual reports to chemical analyses of the springs. From this information patients in both regions could make informed decisions as to which spring best suited their ailment, and springs proprietors could compare their water to that of their competitors. The results allowed newly discovered, smaller, or less popular springs to claim that their waters equaled those of better-known rivals, and established springs trumpeted the strength of their waters as

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Summer of 1837 (Boston: Duton and Wentworth, 1839); Huntt, Observations on a Change in Climate in Pulmonary Consumption. Read Before the Columbian Institute in 1826, and Published in the Medical and Surgical Journal. With Additional Remarks on the Red Sulphur Springs of Virginia (Washington: Jacob Gideon, 1834).

40 Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia. For the Years 1834-1835 (Richmond, 1835), 157. None of the six springs incorporated before 1835, or any of the 24 between 1850-1861, were required to publish chemical analyses (Data taken from John W. Williams, Index to Enrolled Bills of the General Assembly of Virginia, 1776 to 1910 [Richmond: Davis Bottom, 1911], and Acts of Assembly for various years).


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unmatched by any spring in the world. By the 1850s Valentine Seaman’s goal of linking mineral content with a medical cure seemed complete. His idea had become part of a national consensus on the utility of scientific knowledge and the medicinal uses of spring water.

In addition, the chemical results allowed springs to draw comparisons between acclaimed European spas and themselves. Nearly every publication, especially those dealing with Saratoga, whose urban Northern clientele was more likely to have traveled to Europe, equated the waters of a specific American spring with Cheltenham, Tunbridge Wells, Spa in Belgium, Baden-Baden, or several other European springs. Some guides even included tables comparing the exact mineral contents of American springs to their European rivals, with the American springs showing predictably higher mineral contents. \^ Besides associating American springs with the powerful and long-established medical reputations of their European counterparts, the comparison connoted a similar level of luxury, exclusivity, and social sophistication. Linking American and European spas legitimized the new nation’s pretensions of cultural equality with, and eventually independence from, their European rivals.

If the associations drawn from chemical analyses failed to convince invalids of the efficacy of the springs, patients could then consult the numerous testimonials included in most springs publications. Reports of miraculous cures appeared in the earliest springs studies, often as anecdotal accounts, like Samuel Tenney’s 1783 summaries of the soldiers he treated at Saratoga for skin diseases and liver ailments. The scientists and physicians who wrote the second generation of tracts attempted to systematize and

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legitimize these early tales. From “intelligent men from all sections of the Union” and “distinguished medical gentlemen in various parts of the country,” as well as famous politicians, springs promoters solicited “public opinion as to the adaptedness and power of this water” to cure various diseases.\textsuperscript{43} Letters from eminent physicians lent credibility to the claims of medical efficacy, especially if the doctors mentioned that they sent their own patients to the springs. Likewise, an affidavit recounting a miraculous cure and the springs’ power from a prominent individuals like United States Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney or Yale professor of chemistry Benjamin Silliman was designed to impress a reader. If these important individuals endorsed the springs, ordinary invalids could benefit as well.\textsuperscript{44} The springs identified themselves with elite Americans and hoped that potential customers would do so as well.

The content of these endorsements varied little: they began with a description of the disease and its incurability using conventional means and regular physicians, and cited the desperate efforts of invalids to visit the springs in a final effort to restore their health. Then the tone of the letters turned from desperation to joy as the patients related the end of their symptoms and return to almost perfect health. More than one letter echoed the statement of a visitor to Bedford Alum Springs, Virginia that “I am well” and lauded the usefulness of the waters in their case.\textsuperscript{45} Books included a large

\begin{itemize}
\item Rev. Thornton Stringfellow, \textit{Two Letters on Cases of Cure at Fauquier White Sulphur Springs; Embracing, Also, Mineral Waters in General} (Washington: Union Office, 1851), 3; John J. Moorman, \textit{A Directory for the Use of the White Sulphur Waters}, 30-35; Almost every medical guidebook for both Saratoga and Virginia that I have located includes several of these testimonials.
\item Huntt, \textit{A Visit to the Red Sulphur Springs of Virginia}, 28; Burke, \textit{The Virginia Mineral Springs} (1853), 154; \textit{The Northern Traveller; Containing the Routes to Niagara, Quebec, and the Springs; with Descriptions of the Principal Scenes, and Useful Hints to Strangers} (New York: Wilder & Campbell, 1825), 102-103.
\item \textit{The Bedford Alum Springs, Near New London, Virginia}” (Lynchburg, Virginia: Virginian Job Printing, 1854), 11, original emphasis.
\end{itemize}
number of such testimonials, often squeezing in dozens of letters relating to
every conceivable disease, occasionally filling as much as one quarter of their
pages. The majority came from men writing of their own cures or those of
their wives, but a small number of the letters were written by women,
especially those concerning what the authors politely termed "feminine
complaints." Uterine diseases, amenorrhea, and infertility composed a
significant portion of springs business, and authors readily added information
on these ailments to their springs studies. Whether the market was Virginia,
New York, or England, springs promoters knew that both medical efficacy and
business acumen justified appealing to female patients. Regardless of the
letters' veracity, they effectively solicited the business of invalids.

While these case studies aided patients in selecting the spring best suited
to their individual situations, they also projected an image of the physician-
author. The case study was perhaps the most widely used form of medical
writing in nineteenth-century America; its style marked one as a member of
the regular medical community. By including detailed case information,
physicians hoped to engage and solve the perplexing questions of their
profession. The publication of these letters also took place during a period of
medical controversy and sectarian conflict when regular physicians attempted
to stabilize their position as the leading care providers. By agreeing on the
importance of empirical evidence in determining the best therapeutic
practice, they hoped to blunt the critiques of those who attacked their
methods. Testimonials in mineral springs studies spoke to both invalids

46 For a good sampling of testimonial letters, see Thomas Goode, *The Invalid's Guide to the
Virginia Hot Springs: Containing An Account of the Medical Properties of these Waters, With
Cases Illustrative of their Effects* (Richmond: P.D. Bernard, 1846). On female patients in
England, see Victoria Louise Masten, "Taking the Waters: Elite Women in English Spa Towns,
1700-1800" (M.A. thesis, California State University-Long Beach, 1993), 25-36. See also Sarah
Stage, *Female Complaints: Lydia Pinkham and the Business of Women's Medicine* (New York:
eager to cure their illnesses and physicians reading for the latest in medical advances. Their publication shortened the distance between members of a scattered profession and increased their consciousness of themselves as a distinct professional group. These studies stated the therapeutic principles of accredited, reputable, regular physicians.47

Attention to specific symptoms and treatments, as well as scientific detail, set springs physicians apart from competitors across a broad diversity of methodologies, including Thompsonianism, homeopathy, and the water-cure.48 The latter came closest to the therapeutics of mineral water, and the two are often confused. The water-cure, or hydropathy, relied on the external application of water to the body, as well as less extensive internal use, to relieve all sorts of ailments. Initiated by a German peasant in the 1830s and carried to the United States, hydropathy became part of a larger reforming impulse during the mid-nineteenth century.49 Instead of emphasizing the role of the physician, hydropathic treatment advocated the patient’s taking an active part in curing disease. The water-cure eschewed drugs in favor of hot and cold baths and showers, sweat baths (wrapping oneself in blankets until they were soaked with perspiration), frequent purges, and dietary moderation. Believers in hydropathy relied on the interaction between water and either the skin or the digestive organs to achieve a cure. Unlike invalids who attended mineral springs, hydropaths refused to accept that the chemical content of water played any part in treating disease. They also emphasized liberating the patient, especially women, from the authority of regular physicians.

48 Cassedy, Medicine in America, 35-38.
physicians. Mineral springs physicians and patients, however, remained firmly within the school of regular medicine, even prescribing traditional drugs as complements to the waters. Rather than being a direct challenge to the prevailing medical orthodoxy, mineral waters gained inclusion in regular medical reference books as accepted medical agents. If anything, the water-cure’s rise in the 1840s might be seen as a reformist offshoot of the growing popularity of mineral springs resorts. The simultaneous boom in mineral springs and emergence of the water-cure grew from the same cultural impulse. Jacksonian America was a particularly perfectionist society, especially in the North, and nearly every aspect of life, from politics to personal hygiene, seemed in need of reform. Mineral springs and the water-cure both catered to individuals who sought to improve their health and escape from the hectic pace of American life. But while mineral springs offered health as an adjunct to socializing, water-cure institutions restricted their business to healing the patient’s body and mind. Each helped popularize the other, but few antebellum Americans would have mistaken one for the other.

The mineral springs movement continued to rely on the chemical analysis of water despite the contrary, universalistic arguments of


52 Walters, American Reformers.
hydropathy. And if the dissemination of these analyses is any indication, information on the mineral springs maintained a significant profile in print throughout the antebellum era. A significant number of the gazetteers, periodicals, newspaper stories, travel accounts, guidebooks, and broadsides that discussed the medical use of the waters included chemical analyses. The proliferation of printed springs studies, and the capitalization on this trend by local publishers who issued brief, inexpensive yet handsome editions of studies of individual springs, led to greater awareness of the waters' curative powers. But it also allowed invalids and visitors to turn these once scholarly studies into mere souvenirs. Several copies of John Steel's 33-page booklet on Saratoga's Congress Spring bear inscriptions attesting to the gift of the four by five inch hard-bound booklets to "a friend" or "as a token of esteem." The small size, attractive design, breezy content, easy availability, and use as gifts of mineral springs studies marked a shift from their status as serious scientific tomes to objectified tourist commodities. While the earliest springs studies were scientific tracts printed in urban centers for the medical establishment, the proliferation of print and the expansion of springs tourism after about 1840 combined to form a more local, non-medical, and easily accessible springs print culture. That this change affected both Northern and Southern springs indicates the national shift in medical thought and the diffusion of publishing.

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53 For Saratoga, at least nine guidebooks, nine travel accounts, one periodical, and three gazetteers included medical information on the springs. Five periodicals, six promotional broadsides, five travel accounts and two gazetteers from Virginia did the same. Numerous advertisements and articles in local and regional newspapers also contained this information (see, for example, Saratoga Whig, 2 June 1840, p. 2, col. 7; Lexington Gazette, 13 July 1859, p. 3, col. 1).

The net effect of the boom in publication and dissemination of medical and chemical studies was an increased understanding among lay people of the springs’ reputed medical power. Springs visitors delighted in retelling the results of experiments, especially the lowering of live animals into the cone of Saratoga’s High Rock Spring. But they also assessed the medical qualities of the springs by reading the available analyses, often noting that their or a relative’s “Case is described in it & the waters particularly recommended.” Recognizing the comparison, they then urged others to join them to obtain a cure. The authors of springs studies even became minor celebrities at the springs, a role that Dr. Moorman cultivated at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia. He wore gold spectacles, carried a gold-headed cane, traveled in Europe to study its springs, and remained as aloof from the patients as possible. His reputation as the long-standing resident physician led many to recommend that his latest in a series of books on the springs “should be in the hands of every invalid, comprising, as it does, most valuable directions on [the waters’] efficacy and use.”

Books like Moorman’s spread knowledge about the springs, but also produced debates about the efficacy of specific sites. Reading the studies enabled invalids to discount springs that lacked a chemical analysis or to question the validity of those without strong flavor or obvious coloration and precipitates. When an undistinguished place like Lackland’s Well in western


56 Robert Mackay, Saratoga Springs, to Eliza, 23 July 1816, Series D, reel 1, Mackay-Stiles Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill [SHC].

Virginia, the site of a long-established tavern on an important thoroughfare, was “discovered to be a valuable mineral + people humbuged to go there as such” in 1842, an elite visitor noted his displeasure. His objection came not from the spring’s dubious medical value, but from the fact that almost anyone could claim that his spring possessed miraculous curative powers. Once this boast appeared in print, many readers believed it, and the report became frustratingly difficult to disprove.58 The authority and respect that medical and scientific men once commanded seemed to be weakening under the egalitarian onslaught of print culture. Almost anyone with access to a press could assert a spring’s medical utility. In reaction to the diffusion of medical authority, and as a defense against false claims of medical efficacy, many invalids cultivated a cautious skepticism. They believed that “chemists pretend to analyze [the waters] very accurately and confidently tell us their components” in reports that informed readers often considered erroneous.59

What emerged from this cacophony of information on the springs was an inquisitive culture in which people were constantly “talking most learnedly + scientifically of the various properties of the waters,” comparing notes on the different springs and their effectiveness in treating different conditions. Visitors read the chemical studies, occasionally conducted their own experiments, and formed opinions of the qualities of the waters. These topics proved “a fruitful subject of conversation at the springs... not only of this day but some part of every day.” By using the language and data of chemical analysis, supporters of the various springs attempted to persuade each other that their particular spring exceeded all others in medicinal power.

58 William Bolling diary, 9 September 1842, VHS; see also Anne Fontaine Maury diary, 5 September 1831, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia [U Va]; John W. Jarvis diary, 9 July 1849, U Va.
59 James W. Henry, Sweet Springs, to Mrs. Henry, Baltimore, 22 August 1794, U Va; Anon. diary, 14 August 1825, p. 6, New York State Library and Archives [NYSLA].
Chemistry, considered a necessary part of a gentleman's education, became a conversational tool employed by a visitor lest he be "confounded by the learning of those around him."60 Every man could now be his own scientist and physician. In this context, learned studies, once a mark of elite status, degenerated into ammunition for the competitive battle of social display at the springs. Scientific knowledge was losing its power not only to impress, but also, more ominously, to persuade.

But these discussions also carried a larger significance in relation to antebellum medicine. Invalids talked not only among themselves, but engaged their physicians in a dialogue over the best course of treatment. The waters' popular credibility was tempered by the private skepticism of many doctors and patients. Physicians advocated the judicious application of the waters in cases where they were specifically indicated, but their patients preferred to view mineral springs "as the Balm of 'Gilead' or a 'King Cure all'" that served as "a perfect cure for every malady under Heaven." One popular poem even claimed that the White Sulphur Spring "Can cure every evil that ever was known."61 Many regarded the waters as a panacea because doctors sent patients there as a last resort, "Just when we've taken calomel enough."62 Taking the waters served as a less harsh alternative to the gradually fading therapeutics of heroic medicine, but did not directly challenge its principles or domination of the medical scene. The medical guides published by various doctors provided the main source of information for invalids, and the overall tone of the tracts agreed with the overarching principles of regular medicine. Doctors still sought to produce immediate

60 Larkin Newby diary, 14 July 1823, p. 36, SHC.
61 Edwin Bedford Jeffres diary, 1 September 1852, pp. 9-10, VHS; A Trip to the Virginia Springs, or the Belles and Beaux of 1835. By a Lady (Lexington, Virginia: R.H. Glass, 1843), 17; "Ode to the White Sulphur Springs, 1835, Greenbrier Archives [GBA].
changes in observable symptoms, but eschewed the bleedings and harsh purgatives of a few decades earlier. Springs patients tended to avoid physicians at first and instead read medical guides, but when these guides failed they consulted physicians with alacrity. More often than not, the patients were "much indebted" for the doctors' advice. The presence of physicians, and especially resident ones, at mineral springs increased the confidence of many patients. An *eminence gris* like Dr. Moorman, despite—or maybe because of—his aloof nature, reassured patients that someone at the springs was a competent and respected physician. Some guests even attributed the cure of diseases at Dr. Goode's Hot Springs "to the enlightened use of the waters under his direction." That "enlightened use" was flexible and undefined, despite what the doctrine of specificity might say. Few doctors turned patients away because of the unsuitability of the waters to their complaint, instead tailoring the course of treatment to include other therapies. Or they might act like Dr. Clarke, the owner of Saratoga's Congress Spring and its profitable bottling business, who prescribed "whatever spring a person drunk of most freely." Clarke and many of his colleagues readily abandoned the doctrine of specificity when it suited their commercial purposes.

The flexibility that doctors demonstrated in prescribing the waters was due in part to the uncertainties of early nineteenth-century medicine. Despite the growing influence of specificity and empiricism, alternative remedies were often as effective as regular medicine and frequently less demanding of

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the patient. Regular physicians were not regarded by most patients as infallible, however hard the medical establishment attempted to bolster that reputation. Patients, whether men or women, took a leading role in their own cure by evaluating their medical options and deciding on the course of treatment they viewed as the most efficacious. Some visitors even thwarted medical convention by drinking the waters after breakfast “in spite of the wisdom of those who deem it fatal to drink the water on a full stomach.” Invalids occasionally challenged the wisdom of their doctors more directly, as when Edward Eccles followed the advice of Saratoga’s Dr. North, only to discover that “I was not only not gaining anything but rather losing.” Unsatisfied with his treatment, Eccles visited a competing physician, Dr. Allen, who said “I was injuring myself” by following North’s advice, and prescribed a different course of treatment. After several days Eccles reported that “I am improving gradually.” Even though North and Allen adhered to regular medicine and their prescriptions varied only slightly in terms of the timing and amount of water Eccles should consume and the use of small doses of medicine, the differences were significant to Eccles. He made an informed choice among the available medical options based on his own knowledge and the results (or lack thereof) of his treatment. Although he stuck with traditional practitioners, Eccles made the key decisions regarding his cure.

66 Hugh Grigsby Blair diary, 1 July 1842, VHS. The same tension between patient and physician over the proper use of the waters occurred at English spas as well. See David Harley, “A Sword in a Madman’s Hand: Professional Opposition to Popular Consumption in the Waters Literature of Southern England and the Midlands, 1570-1870,” Medical History Supplement 10 (1990): 50-55.
67 Edward Eccles, Saratoga, to Mother, 11 July 1843, Eccles Family Papers, SHC.
The willingness of invalids to switch physicians quickly was due in part to the precarious position of traditional medicine. Regular practitioners held no monopoly over medical efficacy, as any victim of a copious bloodletting, harsh purgative, or mercury overdose could attest. But patients at the springs were not abandoning regular medicine; they manipulated the physician’s lack of absolute authority to demand effective, and if possible non-heroic, cures. However, the supply side of this equation mattered as well. Just as Americans chose from a variety of medical sects, at the springs they could also choose from a number of different physicians. While some springs boasted their own resident physician, no one doctor controlled the medical scene. Homeopaths, water-cure enthusiasts, quacks, and itinerant physicians frequented the springs and siphoned their share of patients from the predominant practitioner.

Springs proprietors also encouraged a diversity of medical options by granting preferable terms to doctors who stayed at their resorts. One physician, Charles William Ashby of Virginia, reported making several consultations in spite of himself during an 1860 tour of the Virginia springs. He had not intended to practice medicine on the trip, but once people heard of his profession they deluged him with requests for advice and readily paid for Ashby’s prescriptions. One springs proprietor charged Ashby only half price for his lodging, “as he thought I had been of service to him in recommending his establishment.” Even at Healing Springs, where a resident physician presided, Ashby offered prescriptions without interruption. Ashby’s only regret from his journey was that he “did not let it be known when I came here that I would practice.” Had he done so, he might have enriched
himself considerably. The situation was similar at Saratoga, where no single doctor dominated the market. One of them, Cyrel Carpenter, urged his nephew to move to Saratoga to continue his practice, as none of the other physicians seemed particularly adept at or attuned to the business of doctoring. While "the regular Physicians let their Patients die," quack doctors and patent medicine hucksters gained patients. In Carpenter's view the medical community in Saratoga, a leading center for using mineral waters, was so inadequate that "A good physician will soon starve them all out." In this situation, the patients controlled the interaction between themselves and their doctor. One visitor to White Sulphur Springs, and there were probably many like him, would ingeniously "meet with a 'Physician' and consult him about his case, & another, &c., then with visitors, compare his situation with others & so on, until it was really amusing to see his tack to find out a Physician and to find out if he charged anything for advice."

The wide-open system of medical care at the springs, combined with the willingness of patients to select and switch treatments, resulted in a mixed record of success. A sampling of people's reactions to the springs reveals that 45.7 percent felt a positive improvement in their health, 29.6 percent detected either a slight improvement, no change, or a general decline, and 24.7 percent reported negative effects from the waters. While a plurality of invalids

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68 Charles William Ashby, Red Sulphur Springs, Sweet Springs, and Healing Springs, to Sarah Elizabeth Ashby, 9, 24 July, 6, 17 August 1860, Folder 1, Charles William Ashby Papers, VHS.
69 Cyrel Carpenter, Saratoga Springs, to Alvin Carpenter, 14 March 1839, NYSLA.
70 Jeffres diary, 3 September 1852, VHS.
71 Data taken from 81 diaries and letters where invalids expressed an opinion on the waters' effects (37 favorable, 24 mixed, 20 negative). For extensive examples of treatment at the springs over an extended period of time, see Saint George Tucker Coalter's letters from the Virginia springs for the years 1833 (Box IV, Folder 28-32), 1836 (Folders 41-42, 45-46), and 1838 (Box V, Folders 3, 10), in the Brown, Coalter, Tucker Papers (I) Group A, SWM; Richard D. Burroughs Correspondence and Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, Correspondence, 1853-1859, Duke; Israel Wilson

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sounded ringing praise for the power of the springs, a majority withheld an absolute endorsement. Far from being the universal cure promoted by their advocates, the springs failed to prove their medical efficacy in a significant number of cases. It is in the ambivalence of many visitors that the actual therapeutic value of the springs lies.

This group of individuals is remarkable because they neither condemned the springs outright nor lavished them with praise. Their reactions sound indecisive—they received some benefits from the waters, but not as many as, or to the extent that, they had hoped. If the waters cured one complaint, they failed to alleviate or exacerbated another. But these invalids did not despair. They resolved to “drink the waters honestly, and with as little of a wry face as possible, until it has been of some service to me, or until I see that it will do me no good.” Most agreed with Robert Mackay of North Carolina who, despite his uncertainty about the strength of the waters and the length of his stay at Saratoga, declared: “having come this distance I am determined to give [the waters] a fair chance.” Invalids vowed to seek the cure “even if it carries me to the last of debt.”

Perhaps the only factor that persuaded people like Mackay to remain at the springs was the hope that the waters would effect a cure. The weight of scientific and medical evidence amassed by guidebook authors appeared compelling, but not convincing, to Thomas Joynes. He wrote, “I cannot withhold my belief in [the water’s] efficacy in my own case.”

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72 Levin Smith Joynes, Salt Sulphur Springs, to Mother, 9 August 1856, Section 6, Joynes Family Papers, VHS; Robert Mackay, Saratoga Springs, to Eliza, 22 July 1816, Mackay-Stiles Family Papers, Series D, reel 1, SHC.
73 William Wirt, Richmond, to Elizabeth Wirt, Washington, 12 August 1825, William Wirt Papers, MdHS.
74 Thomas R. Joynes, Hot Springs, to Levin S. Joynes, Accomack, Virginia, 31 August 1837, Section 3, Joynes Family Papers, VHS.
statement negated the logical response to science in favor of his own personal faith in the waters. It was a sentiment repeated again and again by invalids who had few realistic chances of recovery. Like the sick man in Herman Melville’s novel *The Confidence-Man*, invalids needed to have faith in the cure. Though Melville’s herb-doctor sold a remedy other than mineral waters, his words applied to the springs: "Hope is proportioned to confidence. How much confidence you give me, so much hope to I give to you." Patients at the springs needed such confidence to achieve a cure.75

The few detailed accounts of treatment at the springs that survive today are replete with references to the patients’ “hope.” Often people of deep religious faith, they believed that despite their debilitating ailments, God and the mineral waters would provide relief, if not a cure. Confronted with extremely faint chances of curing their diseases and realizing that the mineral waters were a last medical option, many invalids turned, as did George Munford, to familiar religious tenets for solace. Munford wrote his sister that “there is a balm in Gilead, there is a physician there, and I have only to do as the prophet bade the Heathen—cry aloud to the physician ‘for perchance she sleepeth.’”76 This faith, hope, and determination enabled women like Abigail May to withstand the excruciating treatment of cold showers, physical therapy, and cold wraps on her crippled hand, all of which had only limited success, with a simple declaration: “I can and will bear it.”77

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76 George Munford, Berkeley Springs, to Lucy Taylor, Richmond, 16 August 1828, Folder, Correspondence, 1820-1829, Box 1, George W. Munford Division, Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke. The Biblical reference is to Jeremiah 8:22, a lamentation by the prophet Jeremiah that the health of his daughter Judah had not been cured by the famous resin from a tree in Transjordan believed to cure all ailments. See also Jeremiah 46:11.
77 May diary, 28 July 1800, NYSHA. Two other excellent examples of hope and faith are Genevieve M. Darden, ed., “A Visit to Saratoga: 1826,” *New York History* 50 (July 1969), 283-301; Anon., “Journal of a Trip to the White Sulphur Springs, August 1836,” GBA.
Religious faith, an inchoate medical community, and persuasive scientific and medical studies were not the springs’ only allure. Legitimate health concerns pushed people out of the South’s coastal regions and urban centers in both the North and the South. For Southerners, the annual onslaught of extreme heat brought uncomfortable living conditions and, more importantly, outbreaks of disease. Conventional wisdom held that the heat and moisture of marshy lowlands contributed to “vegetable decomposition” and dangerous miasmas that caused periodic outbreaks of cholera, yellow fever, and similar diseases. Whether or not the theory was viable, epidemics struck often and their effects were ravaging. During June, 1834, Mississippian John Knight reported that “the cholera has burst out again in New Orleans, with unprecedented violence. Upwards of one hundred die daily.” Even worse, the disease “rarely yields to any remedies.” With frequent severe epidemics, most lowland Southerners considered June, July, August, and early September a dangerous “season when half of our population have left us and the remainder dreading the Dangue [sic] or some other fever.” Most preferred to escape the ravages of disease was by fleeing to higher, cooler, drier, and healthier ground.


79 John Knight, Natchez, Mississippi, to Frances Beall, Frederick, Maryland, 11 June 1834, Folder, Letters, 1817-1836, Box, Letters, 1817-1842, John Knight Papers, Duke; Julia Porcher, Hampstead, to Catherine R. Porcher, Pine Ville, South Carolina, 1 August 1828, Folder 1, 1820-
The desire to abandon the low country extended beyond specific epidemics to a general exodus of the wealthy each summer. Overall opinion held that swampy, humid, hot, and stagnant regions were "unhealthy" and "unwholesome." Some medical experts even hypothesized that specific "Diseases of the South" existed. While these opinions generally originated from Northern or foreign visitors critical of the South in general, medical experts from within the region agreed with the overall assessment. Hypothesizing that these ailments originated in "marshy counties" and were characterized by "languor, and disinclination to motion of any kind," Southern physicians recommended a change of climate. A national medical consensus began to emerge in the 1840s and 1850s that supported the value of a change in location to improve a patient's condition. Southerners were especially interested in the salubrious effects of "the health-giving breezes of the mountains." They went not only to the mountainous Virginia springs but also to the piedmont, seashore, and northern resorts. As transportation networks improved and a national tourist culture developed, some Southerners even journeyed to the refreshing air of the faraway Great Lakes.\textsuperscript{80} Northern guidebook authors capitalized on this trend by targeting

their books to tourists from the South who, as summer approached, “accelerate their journey to the more salubrious climate of the north.” They omitted Southern resorts, since mentioning them ran counter to medical orthodoxy. Besides, few Northern tourists found their way south. When Northerners sought to escape hot, occasionally disease-ridden cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Boston for cooler climes, they heading north to the stops on the fashionable tour, not the Virginia mountains. Most tourists and invalids came to Saratoga

From crowded cities and oppressive heat
Flying, to quaff the cool delicious draught,
Where smiling nature all around invites,
And free and pure, ambrosial breezes play.81

Besides offering an agreeable reason to visit the springs, the change-in-climate theory also appeared to realize a substantial number of cures. Although E.M. Grosvenor was ambivalent about the curative powers of Saratoga’s waters, he shared few doubts concerning the change in climate: “The air strengthens my lungs, and rest and quietness do me more good than any kind of medicine.”82 Grosvenor was not alone in his belief in the salubrious effects of fresh air; several visitors to the Virginia springs cited the cool, fresh mountain air “and the shaking of the long passage over the mountains necessary to reach” the springs as the cause of their improving

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82 E.M. Grosvenor, Saratoga Springs, to Charlotte and Sarah Holcomb, 5 June 1833, Box 1, Correspondence, 1812-1839, George Holcomb Papers, NYSLA.
health. Even when the springs failed to heal the patient, travel and exercise did. Complaints about bad roads and rickety carriages vanished as travelers' health improved. When Charles Ellis claimed "that I feel better when I am in the stage or traveling any other way than I do when stationary at the springs," he spoke not only of his own preference for an active life, but also to the significant change in life style Americans experienced at the springs. Rather than leading the relatively passive life of a Northern merchant or Southern planter, men like Ellis suddenly filled their days not by balancing accounts or supervising work, but by riding, walking, dancing, playing various games, and focusing on healthy activities. The change was even more marked for elite women, who enjoyed few opportunities for physical exertion at home. Women and men found the vigorous life so stimulating that they believed "exercise would cure almost every one."

Not all tourists shared Ellis's faith in exercise. In fact, a significant number of springs visitors were confirmed invalids with few hopes of recovery. They wandered gloomily about the hotel grounds, processing solemnly toward the spring at dawn each morning "as though their salvation depended upon it." Their "emaciated sallow faces, made ghastly with fever and ague," frightened more than one votary of pleasure away from the

84 Charles Ellis, Senior, Sweet Springs, to Charles Ellis, Junior, Richmond, 22 July 1832, Folder, 1832, Box 1, Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke; Dandridge Spotswood diary, 15 July 1848, p. 6, UVa; George Munford, Ballston Spa, to Laura Taylor, Richmond, 26 August 1828, Folder, Correspondence, 1820-1829, Box 1, George W. Munford Division, Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke. For a female perspective on the benefits of travel, see Louisa Elizabeth Carrington, Hot Springs, to Henry Carrington, Charlotte Courthouse, 3 September 1831, Folder 1, Section 1, Carrington Family Papers, VHS. On the larger issue of women and health, see Linda J. Borish, "The Robust Woman and the Muscular Christian: Catharine Beecher, Thomas Higginson, and Their Vision of American Society, Health, and Physical Activities" *International Journal of the History of Sport* 4 (1987): 129-154.
fountain. The contrast between invalids and fashionable tourists was so stark that they seldom mingled, each group keeping to its own hotel or springs. Some hotels at Saratoga and Ballston were known as invalid houses where visitors could escape the harried life of springs society, and Virginia's Hot Springs developed such a reputation for invalidism that some fashionable stages drove directly past the hotel without stopping. Passengers took the opportunity, however, to note that the place "seemed to be a gathering place for Disease" whose porches "were filled with invalids... some were limping; some were on crutches; and some were wheeled about like children." Characterized as "a sorrowful sight," few healthy persons visited places like Hot Springs. Those few healthy travelers who stopped became "quite disgusted with this place." Likewise, the constant coughing and spitting at Red Sulphur Springs, "the great rendez-vous for consumptive invalids," so pervaded the resort that, in the words of Jonathan Grimball, "one can't divest oneself of the idea of consumptive disease even at meals."87

85 "Glances at Men and Things," The New Yorker 7, 23 (24 August 1839): 366; George William Featherstonhaugh, Excursion Through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices (London: John Murray, 1844), I: 76; Featherstonhaugh, Excursion Through the Slave States, I: 55.
86 McMaster's and Aldridge's hotels in Ballston are two prime examples, as are the numerous private boarding houses in Saratoga. See The Northern Traveller, 100; The Tourist, or Pocket Manual for Travellers on the Hudson River, the Western Canal and Stage Road to Niagara Falls Down Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence to Montreal and Quebec. Comprising also the Routes to Lebanon, Ballston, and Saratoga Springs (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1834), 92. For Virginia, see Roberta P. Burwell, White Sulphur Springs, to Mrs. Josiah Tidball, 12 August 1840, Section 17, Louise Anderson Patten Papers, VHS; Mark Pencil, Esq. [Mary Hagner], The White Sulphur Papers, or Life at the Springs of Western Virginia (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839), 21; Jane Caroline North diary, 13 August 1852, as quoted in An Evening When Alone: Four Journals of Single Women in the South, 1827-1867 ed. Michael O'Brien (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 165; Thomas Gordon Pollock, White Sulphur Springs, to Mother, 12 August 1860, Folder 5 (1860-1865), Box 1, Abram David Pollock Papers, SHC.
87 Martin Duralde, Red Sulphur Springs, to George W. Ferms, 4 July 1846, Martín Duralde Papers, Library of Virginia; Grimball diary, 6 August 1835, I: 30, SHC.
Few people shared Grimball’s experience, however, as invalids composed only a small minority of total springs visitors. Those few ill visitors’ presence reminded most guests of their trips’ ostensible purpose while invoking a reputedly noble past. Commentators frequently criticized the springs for cultivating a hyper-social atmosphere of competition and display when visitors should be attending to their health, but the jeremiads fell on deaf ears. One of the most damning, and earliest, critiques of the springs came from the pen of Washington Irving, who wrote in 1807 that visiting the springs “originally meant nothing more than a relief from pain and sickness.” But social relaxation and increased popularity turned the springs into a “careless place of resort” where invalidism meant little. If the golden age of invalids had passed by 1807, it must have enjoyed a short life. Perhaps only in the earliest stages of springs history, maybe even before the period of this study, when a handful of invalids drank and bathed out of wooden troughs, did the mineral waters serve solely as a retreat for the sick.

Instead, the vast majority of visitors went to the springs for pleasure. They came “for amusement, and for the preservation rather than the recovery of health.” For these visitors, the chief attraction of the springs was “neither the mineral waters nor the salubrious climate, as these are mere excuses for the journey.” Going to the springs served little medical purpose, but a significant social one: at the springs people enjoyed “pleasure and dissipation.” Epicures and “dissipated men,” not invalids suffering from any

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88 One report estimated that three in 150 guests were invalids (Memoirs of an Emigrant: The Journal of Alexander Coventry, M.D. In Scotland, The United States, and Canada during the period 1783-1831, typed transcript, 25 July 1822, NYSLA), while another claimed a half dozen visitors out of several hundred suffered from an actual ailment (“Journal of a Trip to the White Sulphur Springs,” August 1836, GBA).


of the ailments the springs could cure, gathered there because the waters possessed "the remarkable quality of preventing the malignant effects of repletion."91 Full from the excesses of springs society and life in general, springs visitors relieved their physical complaints and restored mental harmony. Nebulous complaints of general debility brought people to the springs, not acute medical emergencies. They agreed with the poet and social critic Clement Clarke Moore

That idle, pamper'd wealth should gladly haste
To try the traveller's miseries, may be right;
The sickly palate needs some pungent taste
To cure the nausea that mere sweets excite.92

The springs cured more than dyspepsia; they offered a stimulating tonic that relieved the doldrums of everyday life. People could relax and recuperate from the exhaustion that came from striving in American society. Fashionable springs society had moved so far away from curing diseases by 1860 that one visitor called Saratoga "a 'watering-place' where you drink the waters without having need to."93 Yet springs visitors, perhaps feeling guilty about the carefree life they led, were reluctant to embrace the new order of dissipation too readily. Although he initially visited the springs to improve his health, Thomas Gordon Pollock concluded reluctantly that "there is nothing for me do but seek my own pleasure." Resigned, he admitted, "now I see that was the actual though not the ostensible object of my springs trip."94

92 Clement Clarke Moore, "A Trip to Saratoga," 1844, mss. p. 4, Clement Clarke Moore Papers, N-YHS.
94 Thomas Gordon Pollock, *White Sulphur Springs*, to Mother, 3 August 1860, Folder 5 (1860-1865), Box, 1, Abram David Pollock Papers, SHC.
Pollock needed the veneer of invalidism to justify his trip, but quickly realized that he was merely providing a psychological buffer between his motivations and what he considered a legitimate reason to visit the springs. The springs, because of their reputation for curing disease, allowed people to get there without feeling or appearing frivolous. A springs vacation carried moral import, even if in reality it possessed none.

For Pollock and many other Americans, going to the springs meant much more than cultivating health. A social, rather than medical, complaint drew people there. According to the ever-satirical James Kirke Paulding, “the most common infirmity which brings people to watering places, is the disease of I don’t know what.” The symptoms usually appeared generally in early July, especially among women. The typical lady

begins to complain of the intolerable heat of the town, and fans herself violently for several days. If this don’t do, she begins to complain of weakness and want of appetite and spirits; and if this don’t do, the Doctor is called in; who, to get rid of a patient whose disorder he knows to be incurable, recommends a trip to the springs. After this, if the lady is not permitted to go, the husband is voted an inhuman monster at all tea-parties.95

According to Paulding these women manipulated their husbands and fathers, claiming that “the trip is absolutely necessary for her health (which never was better) and positively the last time she will appear in those parts.”96 Their insistence on the trip grew from ennui and a desire to escape the ordinary. Despite Paulding’s apparent distaste for bored women, he admitted that the ailment affected men as well. Fashionable gentlemen labored “under a sort of

95 Paulding, *Letters from the South*, II: 240.
96 Mayo Cabell, Union Hill, to Briscoe G. Baldwin, Staunton, 16 June 1845, Tray 3, Stuart-Baldwin Papers, UVa.
anti-maladie du Pays. They have become tired of the same amusements, and the same people; they have paced up and down the same fashionable promenade till everybody is tired of them." With no new targets for conversation or seduction at home, they set out for the springs, hoping to "find it easier to get new auditors than new ideas." More than simply expanding their social field, at the springs gentlemen relieved "the anxiety of worldly pursuits and vexations" that troubled so many in antebellum society. Going to the springs ameliorated social diseases as much as it aided medical complaints. The springs offered Americans a chance to recharge their bodies and souls, an urgent need in the competitive society of Jacksonian America.

Many of the men and women who traveled to the springs were like Mary Lee, who suffered from general debility: a shattered nervous system, "a horror of crowded places, [and] an indisposition to make the least effort." Yet she continued to travel to the Virginia springs in hopes of curing her elusive ailment. It seemed, wrote her father, that she suffered from "a restless anxiety which renders her unhappy and dissatisfied." Only traveling and socializing cured Lee’s ailments, which were quite likely more mental than physical. Many Americans shared Lee’s nervousness, which physicians and medical practitioners attributed to overexcitedness. The constant striving for status, pecuniary gain, and social position in Jacksonian America, an increasingly egalitarian society complete with the possibility of upward or downward social mobility, drove many to physical and emotional exhaustion. But that

97 Paulding, Letters from the South, II: 231.
was exactly the complaint that the springs treated best. Amidst the hustle and bustle of the fluid social structure that was nineteenth-century America, the springs offered a pleasant, relaxing alternative (at least temporarily) and held out the promise that life’s troubles could be cured with an unpleasant beverage and a few weeks at a bucolic, if somewhat rustic, hotel. Therapy and society combined to provide the possibility of “total regeneration” from life’s pressures.100

Despite the claims of springs physicians, the waters cured few patients of acute diseases yet alleviated a significant number of less serious complaints.101 People attended the springs because they believed the waters aided their illnesses, regardless of the eventual outcome. Springs physicians’ guidebooks and medical tracts popularized the cure while simultaneously democratizing it. With detailed instructions on the utility of different springs in various diseases and directions for their use in hand, invalids no longer needed expert medical advice; they provided it themselves. But by placing their imprimatur on the waters, regular physicians legitimized the dubious medicinal value of mineral springs, turning them into a curative agent, fashionable social rendez-vous, and badge of American cultural accomplishment.


101 Evidence as to the actual effectiveness of the waters in treating specific diseases is limited and inconclusive. Some springs established formal hospitals to study the utility of the waters, as New York State did at Saratoga in the early twentieth century, but the waters never equaled the hyperbolic boasts of their antebellum promoters (Grace Maguire Swanner, Saratoga: Queen of Spas [Utica, New York: North Country Books, 1988]). For a case study, see Audrey Heywood, “A Trial of the Bath Waters: The Treatment of Lead Poisoning,” Medical History, Supplement 10 (1990): 82-101.
The grand hotels of the Virginia springs and Saratoga would never have achieved the degree of popularity they did without the endorsement of medical efficacy. The medical assumptions, practices, and promotional tactics were remarkably similar at Northern and Southern springs. These common elements helped create a rejuvenative society at American springs that by the late 1840s possessed only a veneer of medical efficacy. But it was as a social center that the springs provided their greatest benefit to Americans. By designating themselves a place for relaxation, recuperation, and healing, the springs filled a crucial gap in American culture: they offered an escape from the pressures of everyday life. Yet many found the same status-seeking society of conspicuous consumption and social conflict that they experienced at home.
Chapter Four:
Society of Fashion

The worldly, fashionable, dashing, good-for-nothing people of every state, who had rather suffer the martyrdom of a crowd, than endure the monotony of their own homes, and the stupid company of their own thoughts, flock to the Springs—not to enjoy the pleasures of society, or benefit by the qualities of the waters, but to exhibit their equipages and wardrobes, and to excite the admiration, or what is much more satisfactory, the envy of their fashionable competitors.

Washington Irving, “Style at Ballston,” 1807

The greatest charm of this place, is the delightful society which is drawn together in every agreeable variety... the gay, the young, agreeable and handsome of both sexes, who come to the White Sulphur to see and be seen, to chat, laugh and dance, and to throw each his pebble on the giant heap of the general enjoyment.

Peregrine Prolix,
Letters Descriptive of the Virginia Springs, 1835

Many visitors to America’s mineral springs found the setting and society less bucolic, carefree, and refined than guidebooks and springs promoters would have had them believe. While some agreed that the springs offered “an oasis of repose in the desert of our American hurry,” contrarians insisted that at the springs “all is activity, bustle, and gaiety.” Instead of

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finding themselves amidst the sylvan setting advertised by guidebooks, many visitors imagined themselves “in the most fashionable street, or publick walk, of a large city, rather than in a rural and sequestered village.” The illusion of relaxation proved problematic to those, like the Massachusetts scion Robert G. Shaw, who felt “the pressure of the times, care, anxiety & over work.” Faced with “a severe indisposition last autumn [that] had so exhausted me that I was literally worked out,” Shaw found it “necessary as well as my duty to make an effort to recruit” while at Saratoga Springs. Similarly, at the Virginia springs Clement Claiborne Clay remarked that “after the most oppressive correspondence of Washington, together with many other labors, it is a great relief to do nothing but what promotes physical health & enjoyment.” Fleeing the pressures of commerce and the accompanying social change that characterized early nineteenth-century life, people like Shaw and Clay flocked to the resorts at Saratoga and the Virginia springs, where “life is leisurely... and business is amusement.” Shaw, like so many others, desired “fresh air, rural scenes, exercise and exciting excursions, cheerful society, total relaxation from business.” But once there, he and his contemporaries discovered that Washington Irving’s fashionable competition, a scene described in the first decade of the nineteenth century, complete with the

5 Clement Claiborne Clay, Red Sweet Springs, to Father, 17 September 1854, Box 2, Folder 1854-1856, Clement Claiborne Clay Papers, Perkins Library, Special Collections, Duke University [Duke].

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constant display of fashion and gentility, dominated springs society more than attempts to relax and recuperate. This is the same social atmosphere that historians of English springs discovered more than a century earlier at spas like Bath and Tunbridge Wells, places that American resorts consciously imitated.7 Fashionable competition existed at the springs from the start, and only worsened as their popularity increased, social boundaries weakened, and class animosities intensified during the antebellum period.

The geographically- and socially-diverse springs visitors created a lively social setting that crossed boundaries of region and class. In general, Saratoga Springs claimed a much more disparate clientele than did its Southern rivals. According to one visitor, "There is a greater diversity of character at the Springs than I was prepared to find. There are representations of every grade in our society, except the very lowest."8 Another found Saratoga’s society “composed of all nations, sexes, ages, and complexions.... Such a diversified gallery of portraits I have never seen grouped together.”9 Included in the multitude were “Invalids in search of health, maidens in search of husbands, widows disconsolate, young men inclined to matrimony, [and] politicians looking after votes or characters.”10 What distinguished Saratoga was its intensive social mixing across class lines. Saratoga was “the resort of statesmen, of office holders and politicians; and the great, and would be great. With these are mingled gentlemen of the turf, connoisseurs of the odd trick,

9 “Letter of a Virginian.”

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and the amateurs of poker. With these too will be found the exclusives of society, whether Presbyterian, Romanist, or Churchman; the fashionable lady, and the belle of high pretension.” The resort, in one diarist’s opinion, represented “the world in miniature.” Only at Saratoga could one see a variety of aspects of “the human face. For here we find people from almost all sections of the world, possessed of all their own particular notions, & acting out themselves. There is the High & low, the rich & poor, the Healthy & lame, & the white & the black, the Serious & the gay, the man of business & the man of leisure, as well as the idle and profligate.”

Few visitors bypassed the opportunity to comment on the heterogeneous nature of Saratoga’s society. Because “the most wealthy, educated, and refined” Americans and foreigners favored Saratoga, the resort “as a consequence, attract[s] also those chevaliers who prey upon society, wherever it is accessible, lavish in its expenditure, and free in its amusements.” Only at Saratoga could one “see the vulgar and genteel jumbled together without distinction.” No other watering place afforded a similar opportunity to see the broadest possible spectrum of American society. One New York newspaper columnist differentiated Saratoga’s visitors into


12 “Journal of a Tour to Saratoga Springs, August 1827, by Elihu Hoyt,” ed. Peter M. Rippe, from mss. in collections of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Deerfield, Massachusetts, Traveller’s Accounts, 1826-1830, Saratoga Springs City Historian’s Office [SSCH].


four distinct classes: the real invalids, recognizable by "their gloomy air and cadaverous cheeks;" the fashionables—"those who go to Saratoga to kill time, and make a wake in the water;" the "busters... keen blades from the cities, who come out here not merely to kill time, but themselves also;" and the politicians trolling for votes. Except for "the small shopkeeper and mere labourer, every other class" of respectable society was represented at Saratoga. Even those whose means failed to meet the costs of high society at Saratoga’s finer hotels could, "by the moderate payment of two dollars a day, ...be seated at the same table, and often side by side, with the first families of the country."

These visiting privileges extended to walking the hotel piazza, lounging in the drawing room, and dancing at balls and hops. Less wealthy and fashionable visitors could "thus, for the week or month... stay at Saratoga, [and]... enjoy all the advantages which their position would make inaccessible to them at home."

It was these "ill-bred and obscure" visitors "who, perhaps, by some lucky turn of trade, had got together a sufficient number of dollars for their summer amusement, without ever before having had the leisure or the means to play gentility" that tarnished Saratoga’s luster for the select few. New money was not welcome at the springs.

But even if Saratoga’s liberal access resulted in "a much less display of pomp + wealth" than some expected, the elite still managed to elevate themselves from the masses. Hotels that aspired to a particularly distinguished clientele "displayed no small tact in singling out the fashionable." When dust from the stagecoach ride obscured the clothing of

17 Eliot Warburton, ed., Hochelaga; or, England in the New World (1851), 22.
18 James Skelton Gilliam diary, 26 July 1816, p. 28, Library of Virginia [LoV].

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potential guests, hotel proprietors studied other signifiers of a wealthy patron: "a 'hair trunk' being seen in the baggage boot has proven fatal to several parties." The guests themselves proved an even better deterrent to social pretenders. Those who were "inaccessible by every means as haughty, high-minded and proud" did little to encourage congenial relations between social classes. Social segregation at the springs seemed perfectly natural. People fell "into a particular class; not one formed by any arbitrary rule, but as they are pleased to rank themselves with each other." The very idea that class lines might be crossed, that any "mutual interest could be felt by a multitude of people who had come together to drink water," appeared "preposterous" to one essayist. Despite its socially mixed population, class boundaries remained distinct, if blurred, at Saratoga.

Such was not the case at the Virginia springs, where a more homogenous population and stricter behavioral code enforced social discipline. Virginians still claimed that "there is no place one may see more of human character in a short time" than at the Virginia springs. Some springs like the Fauquier White Sulphur, located between Richmond and Washington near a rail line, attracted a social mixture similar to that at Saratoga: "Health and disease, fashion and ungentility, beauty and ugliness,

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19 William Elliott, Saratoga Springs, to Mother, Beaufort, 9 August 1830, Elliott-Gonzales Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill [SHC].
20 Elizabeth Ruffin diary, 1827, 14 August 1827, p. 54, SHC.
21 S. DeVeaux, The Travelers' Own Book, 90.
23 The social situation at the springs was remarkable similar that of urban areas at the same time. There, crowded conditions and the onslaught of the Market Revolution created a new social setting wherein "traditional notions of social relations, manners, and appropriate appeared in disarray" (John F. Kasson, Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century America [New York: Hill & Wang, 1990], 70-98).
24 William Burke, The Virginia Mineral Springs, with Remarks on their Use, the Diseases to Which They are Applicable, and in Which They are Contra-Indicated, Accompanied by a Map of Routes and Distances (Richmond: Ritchies & Dunnavant, 1853), 51.
old maids and maidens, little girls, boys, and stripling youths, fathers and 
grandmothers, the ‘lately engaged,’ and ‘newly married,’ widows and  
widowers, lawyers, divines, doctors, quack-dentists, writing-masters, artists  
and horse-jockies, merchants, students, clerks, and fops, are each represented  
at Fauquier.”25 But most of the Virginia springs hid behind the Blue Ridge  
and Allegheny mountains and proved harder for the less affluent to reach.  
Just the time required to travel to the springs, usually several days to a week,  
prevented those without extended leisure time from reaching the springs.  
Instead of drawing the mixed-class crowd that frequented Saratoga, the  
Virginia springs’ guests included more than one president, “ladies of fashion  
and belles from the principal cities—foreign ministers—members of the  
cabinet, senators—and representatives, prominent judges—officers of the  
army and navy, and polished private gentlemen.”26  

Terms like “elegant and select,” “the most genteel and orderly,” “highly  
respectable,” “very select and agreeable,” and “the most elegant + refined of  
the Southern Country” described visitors to the Virginia springs.27 Perhaps  
because of the highly stratified structure of Southern society, with its  
emphasis on the gentleman planter, as well as the remote location of the  
resorts, the Virginia springs attracted a much more exclusive clientele than  
Saratoga. Typical visitors were “people of the first rank in the United States;  
they are people of fashion, as well as great wealth; they are mostly from the

25 Six Weeks at Fauquier, 32.  
26 Mark Pencil [Mary M. Hagner], White Sulphur Papers; or, Life at the Springs of Western  
Virginia (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839), 40.  
27 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 40; Dandridge Spotswood diary, 23 July, 1848, p. 20, Virginia  
Historical Society, [VHS]; John Rutherfoord, Hot Springs, to John C. Rutherfoord, 23 August  
1854, Box 3, Folder 1854, John Rutherfoord Papers, Duke; SGTC, Sweet Springs, to John  
Randolph Bryan, Eagle Point, 25 August 1836, Box IV, Folder 42, Brown, Coalter, Tucker Papers  
(I) Group A, Manuscripts Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary [SWM];  
Thomas Gordon Pollock, White Sulphur Springs, to Mother, 3 August 1860, Box, 1, Folder 5  
(1860-1865), Abram David Pollock Papers, SHC.
seaports and great towns.”28 Resorts like Salt Sulphur Springs boasted of their exclusivity: at no other spring was the society “more select, more charming, more intellectual, than it is at the Salt Sulphur.” But the acknowledged leader in exclusivity and social prestige was White Sulphur Springs, which bore “the title of ‘The Queen of Springs.’”29 In the early 1850s one guidebook author reported that “To say that all the elite of the nation are annually seen here would not be true; but to say that a large portion of them, and of the learning, wit, beauty, elegance and fashion of the States is here assembled, is certainly no exaggeration.”30 What set places like the White Sulphur apart was their ability to remove people from the commercial pressures of antebellum society and, unlike at Saratoga, allow them to “luxuriate in all the consciousness of superiority!”31

30 Burke, The Virginia Mineral Springs (1853), 42, 153.
The homogeneity of the Virginia springs encouraged carefree socializing that seemed foolhardy at Saratoga. Because of their small size and narrow social spectrum, at the Virginia springs “there is an entire feeling of equality, a relinquishment of formality, a republican simplicity of manners, a reciprocity of kind, courteous, and unpretending civility, that renders the places peculiarly agreeable.” Even at some of the smaller Virginia springs the company was “very select, + all of us at home with each other.” Saratoga’s problem, according to one Virginia spring proprietor, stemmed from its accessibility “by railroads to persons in every condition of life, and at a trifling expense.” Because of this easy access, “the mass of visiters [sic] is of course composed of all sorts of people. The knowledge of this fact makes men distrustful of each other’s standing, and shy and reserved.” This situation lacked “the enchanting ease of manner, dignity of deportment, and air of true gentility, founded on benevolence and forgetfulness of self, which distinguishes Nature’s gentleman from the mere cockney and pretender,” all qualities that prevailed at the Virginia springs. It was a distinctive “calm repose, that freedom from restraint, that omission of conventional usages, which render the society of our Virginia Springs so delightful.”

Saratoga’s boosters admitted that “men of different degrees of wealth, of station, and of information, are now constantly brought together on certain terms of equality,” but saw such social interaction as a positive quality. The boosters saw the potential for improvement, rather than social degeneration, in the mixing of classes. As one Northern guidebook author noted, “The mere exclusive than Lewis posits and the scene of a significant level of social display, competition, and class negotiation.

superiority of wealth in a railroad car or steamboat is of no avail for the time being, and reciprocal kindness becomes as necessary as it is unavoidable. Persons are here thrown together who otherwise might never meet; and while points of difference are rubbed off in the crowd, much of good, much that is worthy of imitation, is soon observed and speedily adopted.”33 While Southern promoters and elite visitors preferred social stability and exclusivity, some Northern promoters and a smaller number of visitors lauded the beneficial possibilities of social mixing. But social relations at resorts in both sections still adhered to class boundaries in their daily machinations.34

All agreed that the society at both Saratoga and the Virginia springs divided along class lines. The fact that some people journeyed together in groups and continued to “associate together + dance together, which impairs the sociability of the drawing rooms” only exacerbated the sense of exclusiveness that some springs visitors felt. These parties found it fashionable “to be rather exclusive, bringing gentlemen enough with the party to monopolise all the belles belonging to it,” thus preventing any mixing with unknown or undesirable persons.35 But overflowing hotels and crowded ballrooms forced visitors to “imperceptibly form different social parties, with whom you join” in various amusements.36 This exclusivity

33 The Tourist, or Pocket Manual for Travellers on the Hudson River, the Western and Northern Canals and Railroads; the Stage Routes to Niagara Falls; and Down Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence to Montreal and Quebec. Comprising also the Routes to Lebanon, Ballston, and Saratoga Springs, with Many New and Interesting Details (New York: Harper & Brothers, 6th ed., 1838), 105.
34 On class rivalries in public places and their implications, see Kasson, Rudeness & Civility, 2-7, 70-146, 215-145.
35 William Elliott, Saratoga Springs, to Mrs. Elliott, Beaufort, South Carolina, 16 July 1839, 17 August 1828, Elliott-Gonzales Papers, SHC.
36 John Howell Briggs, “Journal of a Trip to the Sweet Springs commencing July 23d and ending September 29th 1804,” 15 August, p. 21, VHS.
hindered the ability of upper-class Americans to meet a large number of their social equals and form a national elite.

Part of the problem of exclusivity arose from the system of introductions that dominated springs society. Decorum dictated that one not strike up a conversation or press an acquaintance unless the two parties had first been properly introduced. One social critic even proposed a system of introductions to ease the entrance of newcomers into Saratoga society. Nathaniel Parker Willis envisioned a Committee of Management staffed by the leading residents of a hotel that would oversee the introductions of guests to one another while ensuring that social mixing occur only within established class boundaries. “Any stranger who had tolerable tact and good manners, would find no difficulty in getting on” under Willis’ system.37 But even those, like the young Virginia woman who received, “without seeking them, many introductions,” felt reluctant to press “them to intimacy.”38 Social organizers at English spas overcame this hindrance by developing a strict schedule of activities that forced people to interact, but only if they met the stringent admission requirements to polite society. Beau Nash, the Master of Ceremonies (his actual title) at Bath, introduced wallflowers to other members of the assemblage. The highly ordered nature of English spas ensured congeniality.39

Americans lacked this kind of system, but the forced isolation at the more remote Virginia springs made it “very easy however to find people to talk to, as many like myself, have no friends and it is inconvenient to be too

37 Nathaniel Parker Willis, “Manners at Watering Places,” in Hurry-Graphs; Or, Sketches of Scenery, Celebrities and Society, Taken From Life (New York: Scribner, 1851), 294-295.
38 J. Lynah, Saratoga, to Mrs. Francis M. Lewis, Philadelphia, 28 March 1857, Box IV, Folder 11, Conway-Whittle Family Papers, SWM.
39 Hembry, The English Spa, 1560-1815, 135-144.
reserved." Openness and congeniality characterized social relations at the Virginia springs. In one visitor’s opinion, the springs were “as sociable a place as you can conceive. Every body knows every body + no introductions are needed.” But most people found they knew only a portion of their fellow visitors at best and needed the help of introductions. At most of the springs “a regular system of visiting from Cabin to Cabin” encouraged people to meet each other. The system worked because people felt at ease among their social equals without fearing the ignoble motives of social pretenders. In addition, “what adds very much to the pleasure of the new acquaintances we make is the apparent disposition of all to make the time of each other pleasant and agreeable.” After just twelve days at White Sulphur Springs, John Rossen had “a good many acquaintances, some of them feel to us more like old friends, than new acquaintances.” Even a self-described “saturnine and unsocial” visitor admitted that “the influence of the lively and brilliant company around has penetrated even my triple folds of apathy, indolence and debility and for the last two weeks I have been so metamorphosed that I hardly know myself and certainly would not be recognized by any sober minded friend.” Even at Saratoga, a notoriously less sociable setting than the Virginia springs, people made “the most delightful and lasting

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40 J. Mackay, White Sulphur Springs, to Mother, Savannah, 6 September 1842, Mackay-Stiles Family Papers, Series D, reel 1, 1795-1849, SHC.
42 Mary Thompson, Red Sweet Springs, Virginia, to Mrs. Frances M. Lewis and Mrs. Mary Neale, Philadelphia, [1848], Folder 36, Conway-Whittle Family Papers, SWM.
44 John Rossen, White Sulphur Springs, to Sister, Camden, South Carolina, 12 August 1839, Greenbrier Archives [GBA].
45 James Alexander Seddon, White Sulphur Springs, to Charles Bruce, 12 August 1858, Section 8, Folder 6, Bruce Family Papers, VHS.
intimacies."46 Socializing was the business of the springs and introductions its currency.

The hyperactive socializing and ever-changing members of springs society posed certain problems. When "ambition, in some form, is the motive that actuates a large portion of visitors at fashionable watering-places," there was bound to be trouble.47 Americans in the early nineteenth century were, as Alexis de Tocqueville described them, a restless bunch, "forever brooding over the advantages they do not possess." The naked ambition of social climbers, as well as the futile efforts of the established elite to limit mobility, created a competitive climate where everyone clambered for the power and privilege of social superiority. At the springs, social mixing between the classes reduced cultural boundaries and created a society with uncertain distinctions of rank.48 Gentlemen and ladies who had once based their claims to authority and power on economic position, land holding, and the family name could not assume that others would defer to their status. By lowering themselves to intermingle with their social inferiors, the elite may have gained the middle class’s esteem, or their anger at the condescension. To guarantee the acceptance of their position and to preserve their ranks against social pretenders, the established elite developed a new standard of behavior that stressed true feeling, sincerity, emotion, and proper manners that would screen those of humbler social rank. Adherents to this new ideology of refinement and sensibility reacted powerfully to experience and were often carried away with compassion or gratitude. People now measured character not solely on family name, but by the quality of one’s emotions. Displaying

46 *The Tourist, or Pocket Manual for Travellers on the Hudson River*, 85.
47 Burke, *The Virginia Mineral Springs* (1853), 43.
benevolence and feeling composed virtue, but only if motivated by philanthropic motives, not self-promotion or personal satisfaction. Still, in many cases people engaged in "the pursuit of emotion for the sheer pleasure of feeling." Emotional extravagance took sensibility to the next level, sentimentalism. Ideally, sincerity in conduct was the mainstay of a culture that believed that the heart gave natural, visible responses to stimuli. Some, like the diarist Abigail May, were "very observing of countenances — and affirm they are (generally speaking) the index of the Heart."

But as Tocqueville noted, "as men differing in education and in birth meet and mingle in the same places of resort, it is impossible to agree upon the rules of good breeding." At the springs status itself seemed open to negotiation and competition. The old gentry emphasized its own refined manners and republican virtue in an ultimately futile effort to avoid competition with the nouveau riche of merchants, professionals, and small landowners. Wealth alone would not equal status; refinement was required as well. From this background a fledging aristocracy arose, "based on principles that could be learned and were superior to those of birth and


50 Tocqueville, Democracy in America, II: 171, 217-220. Although Tocqueville himself never actually visited the springs in either New York or Virginia, his writings managed to capture the social tensions that existed there and throughout American society. His travels never penetrated the interior of Virginia, and his swings near Saratoga, in early July and late August, 1831, were too early and late to catch the height of the springs season. For more on his voyage, see George Pierson, Tocqueville in America (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1969) and the C-Span web page on Tocqueville's travels at http://www.tocqueville.org/.

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family, and even great wealth.” These new leaders reconceived themselves through economic success and moral and cultural superiority, which would no longer be based solely upon land holding and ancient lineage. Hierarchy still existed, but it derived its legitimacy from the virtue and character of rulers and citizens. The new pseudo-aristocracy claimed to be merit-based.51 In an era when the rising middle class was threatening the position of the wealthy, gentility lent legitimate social power to its practitioners and supported class authority. Pretenders might copy the manners and dress of gentility, but they could never truly attain refinement, an unlearnable internal quality. Gentility answered the challenge from the middle classes because it “deepened the division between rich and poor, adding a moral dimension to differences in wealth.”52

Here then was the central tension of life at the springs: a contest for social and cultural authority between old and new money. The fledgling American aristocracy perished in the Revolution, but traces of class rivalries and animosities persisted “in the midst of the democratic confusion that ensue[d].”53 At the springs men like Clement Clarke Moore, a New York City Federalist and landowner who railed against the advance of urban commerce, mixed with social climbers like Thomas J. Jackson (later known as “Stonewall”), the son of a hard-scrabble family from western Virginia who tugged hard enough at his bootstraps to graduate from West Point, serve with distinction in the Mexican War, and secure a professorship at the Virginia

53 Tocqueville, Democracy in America, II: 100.
Military Institute. Both men, despite the claims of some commentators that middle-class gentlemen like Jackson could not afford the trip, frequented the springs, but differed in almost every part of their background and character. Moore probably would have placed Jackson among the people he described in his poem, "A Trip to Saratoga":

Now, rough mechanics leave their work undone,
And, with pert milleners and prentice youth,
To some gay, throng'd resort away they run,
To cure dyspepsia or ennui, forsooth!

The scarcely concealed point of Moore's poem is that the lower classes did not belong at places like Saratoga, and ruined it for members of the elite like himself. That an aspiring gentleman like Jackson went there as well only furthered the problem: now Moore had to deal with people who seemed to be refined, even if they were not from the most select families. Moore and Jackson, though they never met, symbolized the culture clash between established families and the new middle class that drove life at the springs.54

More than simply an enjoyable excursion, a trip to the springs was a social statement. Just going to the nation's mineral water resorts marked one as part of a social elite, or at least an aspiring member of that group. But shaking hands, bowing and curtsying, exchanging pleasantries, and meeting

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new people composed only a small part of the springs' attraction to tourists.
Mineral springs in both Virginia and New York State were part of a growing
touring impulse in mid-nineteenth century America that was a direct
imitation of English models. The sons of the British aristocracy began
peregrinating around Europe in the mid-eighteenth century in search of
worldly experience, culture, and dalliances not permitted at home. In an
effort to equal their cultural cousins, wealthy Americans joined the European
Grand Tour after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 and eventually
created their own version in the United States.\textsuperscript{55} Spurred by an interest in
rural landscapes and eased along their journey by improved transportation
networks, by the 1820s and 1830s more and more Americans embarked on
extended summer tours to landmarks like Niagara Falls, the Hudson River
Valley, and the mineral springs.\textsuperscript{56} As one commentator wrote, “Summer in
the United States is the season for travel, and it is then when all, whom
inclination may lead and convenience will permit, are in motion for some
quarter where health and recreation are the chief attractions for the journey;
or where fashion has erected [its] temple.”\textsuperscript{57} Americans toured even “in spite
of the inconveniences extended upon collecting together in large numbers,
during a season when the heat is truly oppressive.” During the summer
months, travelers met “with crowded stages, crowded hotels and boarding
houses, crowded steam boats, and crowded drawing rooms. You see people

\textsuperscript{55} Lynne Withey, \textit{Grand Tours and Cook's Tours: A History of Leisure Travel, 1750 to 1915} (New
\textsuperscript{56} Dona Brown, \textit{Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century}
Attractions in the Nineteenth Century} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3-5; Roger
Haydon, \textit{Upstate Travels: British Views of Nineteenth-Century New York} (Syracuse, New
York: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 1-29; Barbara G. Carson, “Early American Tourists and
the Commercialization of Leisure,” in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds.,
\textit{Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century} (Charlottesville:
University of Virginia Press, 1994), 404.
\textsuperscript{57} Pencil, \textit{The White Sulphur Papers}, 13.
tormenting themselves by parading in all the bondage of ceremony and full-dress amidst glare and dust, when you would naturally suppose that a cool nook in the forest, and a dress of easy and unrestrained negligence would be among the necessaries of life for the time being.”58 Only fashion, “the goddess who can make an Oasis in every desert,” could cause a phenomenon, in which “from June to September, all parts of the country pour forth their children, on the pilgrimage of fashion.”59 People journeyed great distances and endured numerous hardships “for the sake of spending a week or two among the fashionable to see & be seen.”60

As an integral component of the new travel impulse, each mineral spring, and especially its visitors, wanted to believe that its society surpassed all others in fashion. For the most part, visitors agreed. In 1813 Saratoga Springs exceeded, in one visitor’s opinion, “anything for gaiety and dissipation of any establishment or watering place I have visited.”61 Just a few years earlier Elkanah Watson had described a gathering in nearby Ballston Springs, New York of over 100 men and women “principally moving in the walk of high Life, who came... to see, and be seen.” This was a marked contrast to his visit of a fifteen years earlier, when Watson declared, “all is rudeness + barbarism—the accommodations only fit for Indians.”62 But parochialism prevailed, as most springs enthusiasts believed that only their favorite regional spring offered luxurious amenities. Many northern travelers doubted the sophistication of accommodations at the southern

59 Gilpin, A Northern Tour, 66.
60 Hoyt, “Journal of a Tour to Saratoga Springs,” 6 August 1827, SSCH.
62 Watson, “Mixed Medley,” 19 September 1805, p. 64; Journal B, 15 September 1790, p. 374, Folder 3, Box 2, Elkanah Watson Papers, New York State Library and Archives [NYSLA].

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springs, but James Kirke Paulding allayed their fears “that there is nothing refined to the south of the Schuylkill, and no watering-place worth visiting.” In 1816 he found Berkeley Springs, Virginia “as gay, as fashionable, and far more delightfully situated than any I have ever visited.” The only question for travelers seemed to be how “those who have means and leisure should tear themselves away after a few days’ enjoyment.”

This fashionable society drew the likes of the fictional Frank Meriwether, a southern planter depicted in John Pendleton Kennedy’s 1831 novel Swallow Barn, who journeyed to the springs late each summer “for the crowds that resort there for the same reason which operates upon him”: escaping the unhealthy summer weather in the tidewater and “for the opportunity this concourse affords him for discussion of opinions.” Meriwether and his fellow “votaries of pleasure are willing to be crushed to death, to obtain a chance of laying their offerings on the shrine that fashion has set up.”

Besides overcrowding, Southerners were “even willing to submit to the scanty diet, the filth and the various impositions, about which the reports are, if possible, worse this season than usual.” One visitor professed his willingness “to stand all these for a few days, just to get a glimpse of gay life at the great watering-place of Virginia.” The desire, or “total possession,” of many fashionable Americans to visit the springs reminded one visitor to White Sulphur Springs of “nothing short of the intense feeling of the

65 John Pendleton Kennedy, Swallow Barn; Or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986 [1831; facsimile edition of 1852 imprint]), 34.
67 Levin Smith Joynes, Salt Sulphur Springs, to Mother, 9 August 1856, Section 6, Joynes Family Papers, VHS.
Hebrews at Jerusalem.”68 Saratoga proved equally popular, “but fashion,” wrote one visitor, “will make some of us restless to get into a larger crowd.”69 Dissipation, excess, fashion, and competition gave the springs their vitality. Socially conscious Americans felt absolutely obligated to attend the year’s premier social gathering despite the rustic conditions in the South or the inter-class social mixing at Saratoga, because doing so marked them as one of the fashionable elite. Skip the springs, regardless of their drawbacks, and your status fell. But the allure of fashion also exposed the springs to criticism.

The fashion that popularized the springs also transformed them. Resorts that once catered to an exclusive clientele of a few hundred visitors soon attracted thousands of visitors from across the social spectrum. By 1839 the springs resembled “a general muster, under the banner of folly, to drive care and common sense out of the field.”70 Writers quickly pronounced the demise of Saratoga because of its increasing popularity. “For a time the ‘select’ had it all to themselves,” wrote a British traveler, “but by-and-by ‘everybody’ began to resort to it, and on ‘everybody’ making his appearance the ‘select’ began to drop off, and what was once very genteel is now running the risk of becoming exceedingly vulgar.”71 During the 1850s the crowds had grown to the point that an American social critic echoed his British counterparts in lamented that “Everybody goes to Saratoga now.... Merchants, shop-keepers, and tradesmen, with their wives and daughters, all mixed up together, into a kind of hodge-podge. It used to be a fashionable place of resort—but people

68 P.G., White Sulphur Springs, to Elizabeth Greene, New York, 7 July 18[?], GBA.
69 John Rutherford, Salt Sulphur Springs, to John, 17 August 1859, Box 4, Folder 1859, John Rutherford Papers, Duke.
70 Frederick Marryat, A Diary in America with Remarks on Its Institutions (New York: Knopf, 1962 [1839]), 74.
71 Alexander Mackay, The Western World; or, Travels in the United States in 1846-1847 (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1849), II: 213.
that think any thing of themselves, don’t go there now.” 72 Advised that their watchmaker attended the springs, one family decided to avoid Saratoga that year, declaring that “genteel people will have to stay away, then, that’s all.” 73 This was the same criticism—that a socially inferior and undesirable clientele was invading the springs—that English commentators made of their nation’s spas at the turn of the eighteenth century. The problem was worse in early America, where, as Michael Zuckerman suggests, society was too closely drawn to allow an aristocracy to develop. Repeated attempts by an insecure elite to establish its social superiority failed at the mixed society of the springs. 74 But fashion, despite such criticism, continued to send her throng toward English and American springs each summer; the crowds grew rather than decreased. The very “uniformity” of fashion was liberating. “By its magic influence on dress and demeanor, it reduces grace and deformity, beauty and ugliness, youth and age, activity and decrepitude, talent and stupidity, to a perfect level. All are alike—all look alike, act alike, talk alike, feel alike, think alike, and constitute as it were one universal identity.” 75 Fashion, by making everyone similar, allowed imitators to infiltrate the upper reaches of society. What they found there was a constant display of manners, pretensions, and social status.

“Life at the springs is a perpetual festival. The people dance and drink—drink and dance,—rising early to do the one, and sitting up late to

73 Arthur, Heart-Histories, 156.
75 Paulding, The New Mirror for Travellers; and Guide to the Springs (New York, 1828), 235.
perform the other.” Most visitors agreed with this guidebook description of daily life at the springs: “Amusement in all Shapes, & in high Degrees, are constantly taking Place” at both Saratoga and its Virginia rivals. The nature of these amusements shaped springs society—a mixture of “killing Time—that arch enemy” and social display. The wealthy Americans who visited the springs enjoyed such an abundance of leisure time that they sought ways to “kill” it. Entertainments at the springs were “continually brought forward to amuse & to pick your pockets,” in pursuit of the goal of disposing of leisure time. But if they developed into “a strange succession of agreeable nothings, to which we become more attached than can be well imagined at the outset,” it was because these leisure pursuits held social meaning. Everyday activities at the springs were more than simple ways to pass the day; they constituted the social competition between and display among classes that lay at the core of springs society. The “competitive community” that Charlene Lewis has described at the Virginia springs was a national dish, spiced with regional accents.

The daily round began early at both Saratoga and the Virginia springs. Invalids rose at five thirty in the morning to stagger to the spring and drink the waters. A visitor to Saratoga Springs was astonished to look out his window at dawn “to see the crowded groups assembled around, & hastening to Congress Spring.” Because of its location just a few hundred feet from

76 Our Summer Retreats, 30.
80 Anonymous, “Diary of a Tour of New York and Canada,” 1834, p. 192, N-YHS.
Saratoga’s largest hotels, most drinkers patronized the Congress Spring. A “constant stream of visitors flowing down the avenues in all directions” led to the fountain. Of the nearly 800 visitors at Saratoga in 1822, one commentator estimated nearly all of them “drink this water every morning.”\footnote{Netta, “First Impressions of Saratoga, No. 2,” \textit{National Era} 13, 659 (18 August 1859): 1; \textit{Memoirs of an Emigrant: The Journal of Alexander Coventry, M.D. In Scotland, The United States, and Canada during the period 1783-1731} (typed transcript prepared by The Albany Institute of History and Art and the New York State Library, 1978), 25 July 1822, p. 1881.} The day at the Virginia springs broke very similarly: the visitors “all turn out from their little burrows, meet in the public walks, and go down to the spring.” Even slow risers or those who wished to avoid the crowd benefited from the spring water. One observer noted that “a maid with a pitcher to carry the cooling draught to some sleeping beauty” made the rounds of the cottage rows, a task performed by the personal servants of wealthier guests.\footnote{Marryat, \textit{A Diary in America}, 234; Pencil, \textit{White Sulphur Papers}, 140.}

Even at this early hour, when dew covered the grass and a light fog often obscured the view, fashion ruled. Visitors dressed in shabby chic, many “enveloped in shawls and surtouts,” or “the primitive styles of dishabille.”\footnote{Latrobe, \textit{The Rambler in North America}, 128; Mary J. Windle, \textit{Life at Washington, and Life Here and There} (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1859), 210.} Some chose to display at least a touch of fashion by adding to their “loose morning robes... a kind of fringed hood of crochet work” over their heads.\footnote{Charles Richard Weld, \textit{A Vacation Tour in the United States and Canada} (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), 22.} Other ladies appeared “nice and white and fresh looking, wearing all manner of head gear,” a style matched by men “in every sort of summer wear.”\footnote{Netta, “First Impressions of Saratoga, No. 2,” \textit{National Era} 13, 659 (18 August 1859): 1.} The healthy effects of the water drew only a part of the early morning drinkers, however. Many came to “walk among the multitudes” in the hour before breakfast “when the company all gather” at the spring. It was a “time for
observation—where you may learn the news, survey the new comers; and where diffident men take stolen glances at beauty.”86 Saratoga’s guests enjoyed walks about the manicured lawns of Congress Park “hailing old acquaintances” and making new ones.87 Some found drinking the waters so early in the morning “not fashionable... indeed vulgar.” But the majority of visitors preferred to wander around the park, listen to the bands playing operas and open airs until eight, and admire others’ equipages.88

Just getting a glass of water to drink involved a competition. In both springs regions, “dipper boys” served water from long-handled sticks with attached cups to visitors. Slaves dipped the water at the Virginia springs, while young boys staffed the rail around Saratoga’s fountains, in many cases driving “a thriving trade” by charging (or coercing a tip of) one cent per glass.89 The dipper boys, however, distinguished the rich from the less well-to-do: “An imposing exterior is sure to procure for its possessor their services, while individuals less richly attired, or whose physiognomy indicate a less liberal disposition, are often compelled to wait till it is more convenient to attend to their wants.”90 The drinkers themselves created rivalries at the springs to “vie with each other which will swallow the most water.”91 Staid old gentlemen and polite ladies seemed “intent upon putting an end to the Spring” by draining as many as twelve glasses a morning. While doctors recommended four to six glasses at maximum, many visitors agreed that “tis

86 Hoyt, “Journal of a Tour to Saratoga Springs,” 7 August 1827; Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 140
87 Anonymous journal, 14 August 1825, NYSLA.
89 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 142; Willis, American Scenery; or, Land, Lake, and River (London: George Virtue, 1840), I: 21; Ellen Bond diary, 30 July 1850, NYSLA.
91 J.B. Dunlop diary, 1810-1811, N-YHS.
somewhat wonderful to see how much of this water can be drank without injury." But the waters did exert an effect on the quaffers. One North Carolinaian was "amused & disgusted to see the vast crowd at the Spring in the morning among whom are the first Ladies of company drinking the water, when the object is known by all the men." His revulsion stemmed from the fact that "after drinking the necessary quantity of water, in order to ease the operation, the Ladies go directly to the House + Walk the piazza... among 20 or 30 men + when they feel the effects they pop out of sight for a short time, return, walk, be off, + return again so on until all that is required is over." Many less sensitive visitors drank the waters as part of their daily regimen, scheduling the waters’ diuretic effects to be "over in time for breakfast," the next event on the regular social calendar.

Breakfast paled in comparison to other meals in terms of fashion and social rivalry. Hours were flexible, with breakfast served from eight to ten "for those who dislike early rising." Enough diners assembled on the hotel portico by seven thirty to necessitate an ordered system of bell ringing to instruct guests to enter the dining room and take their seats, each of which was marked by a place card, thus preventing "rushing and crowding." Most guests attended but eschewed formal attire, perhaps the only time of the day they did so. At breakfast "you may wear anything and not appear singular in such a crowd, from a ninepence calico wrapper, with the hair plain on the

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93 William C. Lord, Saratoga Springs, to Mrs. Lord, Wilmington, North Carolina 18 August 1827, Lord Family Papers, SHC.
94 Christopher C. Jenkins, Saratoga Springs, to Mrs. CC Jenkins, Charleston, South Carolina, 13 July 1826, Christopher C. Jenkins Papers, Duke.
95 Robert McCoskry Graham diary, 30 July 1848, margin of pp. 90-91, N-YHS.
96 Spotswood diary, 17 July 1848, p.12, VHS.
face up to silks + curls.” Most remarkable, in one English visitor’s opinion, was the “rapidity with which [breakfast] is dispatched” at Saratoga. Slow eaters took only fifteen minutes to consume their victuals while the speedy needed a mere five minutes to devour breakfast. Businessmen in America’s great cities needed to down their meal quickly to get on with the day’s affairs, but visitors to the springs, “with the entire day before them, and nothing whatever to do,” ate with the same haste as counting-house clerks. Few chewed thoroughly, and nine of ten diners rose from their chairs before finishing the meal “with the last mouthful still unswallowed, and dispose of it gradually as they walk along.” More refined visitors like James Kirke Paulding objected to this practice; he preferred “to masticate before I swallow my victuals.” In these eating habits people confronted the very pressures they sought to escape by coming to the springs: “Business may have originated, but it cannot always excuse the practice of fast eating; and the inmates of [the springs] were in perfect idleness.” While attempting to leave behind the pressures of antebellum life, many visitors continued the same hectic pace at the springs. They ate as if they were late for an important meeting or had a train to catch, not as if they were on vacation.

97 Roberta P. Burwell, White Sulphur Springs, to Mrs. Josiah Tidball, 12 August 1840, Section 17, Louise Anderson Patten Papers, VHS. There is little evidence that spa-goers in the early national period followed what later became the Grahamite diet. A few doctors (especially at the Virginia springs) prescribed a blander diet than usual but most springs visitors ate the meat-centered, fatty diet typical of antebellum America. It was only at water-cure establishments that experiments with diet and health became popular (see Harvey Green, Fit for America: Health, Fitness, Sports, and American Society [New York: Pantheon, 1986]; Stephen Nissenbaum, Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform [Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1980]).

98 Memoirs of an Emigrant, 25 July 1822, II: 1881, NYSLA.

99 Buckingham, America, Historical, Statistical, and Descriptive, II: 442.

100 Paulding, Letters From the South, I: 196.

101 Patrick Shirreff, A Tour Through North America; Together With a Comprehensive View of the Canadas and United States (Edinburgh, 1835), 57.
The time after breakfast, because it preceded few major social events, often assumed a slower pace. "Lounging," making calls, promenading, and drinking from various springs occupied most of the forenoon at both Saratoga and the Virginia springs. Saratoga’s visitors walked to the train station to see their friends board the ten o’clock departure, while guests in Virginia “disperse[d] in various ways—some to their cabins, to prepare for visiting—some to the drawing room for music—some ride on horseback—some walk.” In both places, cards, billiards, nine pins, reading, and especially conversation passed the time. Occasionally people assembled at the springs to drink the waters, in the hotel ballrooms to practice their dancing, or on the piazza to listen to a band perform music. But more often, visitors searched for ways to “pass the day” or “dispose an hour or more of lingering time” during the “the listless time” before dinner.

One of the most popular mid-morning activities was a walk or ride into the countryside. Walking occupied countless hours for Saratoga’s visitors, who strolled around Congress Park or the town’s tree-lined streets each morning. As early as 1800 women and men walked the countryside around Saratoga’s nearby rival, Ballston Springs, to admire views. The wide hotel piazzas offered visitors another opportunity to display “the elegance of their morning costume.” Virginians seemed more hesitant to walk anywhere but the immediate grounds of the springs and the central hotel lawns. A northerner visiting White Sulphur Springs “was surprised, that fashion and

103 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 28; Anonymous diary, 14 August 1825, p. 5, NYSLA; Latrobe, The Rambler in North America, 130; Thomas Low Nichols, Forty Years of American Life, 1821-1861 (New York: Stackpole Sons, 1937, [1864]), 192.
104 Bond diary, 1 August 1850, NYSLA; May diary, 21 August 1800, NYSHA; Charles Astor Bristed, The Upper Ten Thousand: Sketches of American Society (New York: Stinger & Townsend, 1852), 115.
ennui, and the listless indolence of a watering place had not yet suggested, to
the ladies and the beaux, promenades in the glens and on the mountain sides,
so rich in botanical and floral treasures.” The reason was quite obvious to a
commentator who noted that carriages transported visitors to each meal, “for
in Virginia Ladies Seldom or never Walk.”

Perhaps no other activity entertained Virginia’s spring-goers during the
hours after breakfast more than riding “along the wild and romantic roads,
which wind through the country, on the fine Virginia steeds, which are
found in this region.” Morning excursions were also popular at Saratoga,
but the mode of transport changed. There visitors favored carriage rides. Each
morning the stages and private carriages lined up outside Saratoga’s hotels for
morning excursions. The “scene of bustle + confusion,” in one observer’s
opinion, “bore more the appearance of a race course, than any thing I can
compare it to.”

Upon returning from their morning jaunts, springs visitors readied
themselves for the next milestone on the social race-course, dinner. The meal
was usually served between one and three in the afternoon, but crowds
gathered well ahead of time. As he arrived at White Sulphur Springs, Mark
Pencil witnessed the company “going to dinner, and all the walks and
avenues leading from the different cabins were streaming with lively forms.”

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of Virginia, 1984), 28 July 1808, p. 269.

106 “Visit to the Virginia Springs, No. II,” *SLM* I (June 1835): 545. See also Briggs, “Journal of a
Trip to the Sweet Springs,” 15 and 31 August 1804, pp. 15, 21, VHS; H.P. Tompkins, White
Sulphur Springs, to W.P. Smith, Gloucester Courthouse, 21 September 1832, Box 3, Folder,
Letters April-December 1832, William Patterson Smith Papers, Duke; C.C. Clay, Red Sweet
Springs, to Father, 17 September 1854, Folder 1854-1856, Box 2, Clement Claiborne Clay Papers,
Duke.

A band played on the hotel’s porch while the prospective diners gathered. One Saratoga visitor compared the crowd assembled outside the dining room in parlors and on piazzas to “a resuscitated crowd, like an ant-hill into which a mischievous boy, or an equally mischievous professor of natural history, has thrust a stick.” Guests cast nervous glances at the dining room windows, hoping to beat the rush into dinner. Even though the doors remained locked, some ladies and gentlemen entered via passageways from their private rooms: “The ignoble vulgus, in the interior colonnade, were kept out until the ladies and those accompanying them were seated.” But once the doors opened, “in rushed, helter skelter, the eager crowd.” Some “pounced” on their seats while others scrambled about, in the era before place cards, looking for spots. It seemed that “in the hurry scurry of entering... some were leaping in at the windows.”

Various springs attempted to moderate the chaos by instituting a system of assigned seating. Place cards were used sporadically at Saratoga, but almost every Virginia spring adopted the system. Each visitor found a card bearing his name at a table setting. Writers agreed that the place card system “cannot be too much commended” because it prevented the “rushing and crowding” that had previously characterized dinner. Some of the smaller Virginia springs carried the system even further by establishing a seniority system for seating similar to the model adopted at some English spas. Those newly

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108 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 23.
110 Mackay, The Western World, as quoted in Haydon, Upstate Travels, 111-112. See also “Odds and Ends” journal, 1832-1835, Box 4, John H.B. Latrobe Family Papers, Maryland Historical Society [MdHS].
arrived at the spring sat at the far end of the table, while veterans sat farther up towards the head, where the spring's proprietor presided.\textsuperscript{112} Hopefully the system would encourage people to develop relationships with those around them and establish some measure of social stability. But even this innovation failed to eradicate the hectic scene at the dinner table.

Dining was, above all, done on a grand scale. Tables stretched across long rooms used for balls in the evenings. Sometimes hotels crammed extra seats in by combining "three long Tables spread as long as an immense room will admit of."\textsuperscript{113} Diners at the Sweet Springs in 1839 found themselves crowded into a room "where over two hundred persons were struggling for elbow room at two tables only large enough for half that number."\textsuperscript{114} Amidst these cramped conditions, many questioned the pretense of elegance. The Englishman George Featherstonhaugh could not describe "the noise, the confusion incident to a grand bolting operation conducted by three hundred American performers" dining at White Sulphur Springs. "Almost every man at table," it seemed to Featherstonhaugh, "considered himself at job-work against time, stuffing sausages and whatever else he could cram into his throat."\textsuperscript{115} As at the day's earlier meals, people ate "as if they had not a moment to lose." One diner devoured his meal in eight minutes, most of the table finished within twelve, and after twenty minutes only C.O. Lyde remained at his table at White Sulphur Springs.\textsuperscript{116} Both Featherstonhaugh

\begin{footnotesize}
\item[113] Robert Mackay, Saratoga Springs, to Eliza, 22 July 1816, Series D, reel 1, Mackay-Stiles Family Papers, SHC.
\item[114] Pencil, \textit{White Sulphur Papers}, 48.
\item[115] George William Featherstonhaugh, \textit{Excursion Through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices} (London: John Murray, 1844), I: 76.
\item[116] C.O. Lyde diary, 7 July 1841, pp. 28-29, Duke.
\end{footnotesize}
and the Southern gentleman Lyde preferred a more relaxed, refined dining experience. If the springs supposedly represented the finest in American society, then they expected that table manners there would be impeccable and in keeping with the standards of elite Anglo-American culture.

But once waiters served the food, "such a clatter of dishes and a noise of knives and forks arose, mingled with a chorus of human voices, some commanding, others supplicating the waiters, as I had never heard before." Waiters rushed to and fro, occasionally crashing into each other, throwing the discord of "a smash of crockery or crystal" to the cacophony.117 "The confusion of tongues, like the sound of many waters; the enormous consumption of food; the mingled demands for more; the cloud of black waiters passing down the sides of immense tables; the hungry, eager faces seated at them," formed, for one observer, "a most amusing subject for contemplation."118 Diners like James Silk Buckingham considered the experience less comical: "The contest for the dishes is a perfect scramble; the noise and clatter of the waiters and their wares is absolutely deafening."119 Another writer compared the scene at Saratoga to dining "Amid a din, 't would rival Babel."120

Many visitors attributed the confusion to the "crowd of undisciplined negro waiters" that ran the dining rooms at the springs. Diners in Virginia encountered black waiters carrying "dishes as if they were mulatto harmony instruments, and every one is in momentary dread of being overwhelmed.

117 Mackay, The Western World, in Haydon, Upstate Travels, 112.
119 Buckingham, America, Historical, Statistical, and Descriptive, II: 442.
120 Samuel Sombre [James Watson Gerard], Aquarelles: Or Summer Sketches (New York: Stanford and Delisser, 1858), 36.
with an avalanche of victuals.\footnote{121} At Saratoga "nothing can be seen, but waiter bumping against waiter, and dish rattling against dish."\footnote{122} Despite the apparent confusion, African-American waiters achieved a high level of efficiency and discipline. That a visitor to the Virginia springs referred to dishes as "mulatto harmony instruments" indicates that waiters delivered the food with some skill, a quality usually reserved for slaves' musical efforts. But Saratoga's African-American waiters achieved an even higher level of accomplishment and status. The thirty "colored men servants (not slaves)" at one hotel worked with "precision and order" in bringing food to the table. Interestingly, the author differentiated the term "servant," which was used as a synonym for "slave" in the South, from the latter, more blunt, term. Emphasizing that the waiters were servants, not slaves, demonstrated the author's politics and conferred a degree of social status, however servile, on the waiters.\footnote{123} This high opinion of the waiters was not isolated. A British visitor described how at the United States Hotel, Saratoga's largest and most prestigious establishment, 150 "negroes" waited on 600 diners, "commanded by a black maitre d'hôtel." Acknowledging that such an undertaking was "no trifling task," he recognized the skill of the waiters who, "dressed in spotless white jackets, extend their hands over the [platter] covers, and, at a signal from their chief, stationed in the center of the saloons, remove them simultaneously." Even amidst the clatter of cutlery and din of conversation, as the "black troops are rushing hither and thither in hot haste, at the bidding

\footnote{121} James Alexander Seddon, White Sulphur Springs, to Charles Bruce, 12 August 1858, Folder 6, Section 8, Bruce Family Papers, VHS. Charlene Lewis notes that African-American waiters at the Virginia springs formed part of the romantic landscape, rather than a vital, noticeable part of the resorts' operation ("Ladies and Gentlemen on Display," 340).
\footnote{122} Edward Allen Talbott, \textit{Five Years Residence in Canada, Including a Tour of America in the Year 1823} (London: Longman, 1824), 349.
\footnote{123} J.E. Snow, Saratoga Springs, to "Bro and Sist-Snow," 7 August 1851, Traveller's Accounts, 1840-1869, SSCH.
of impetuous Southerners or less irascible Northerners," the head waiter maintained his command. "At a clap of his hands [the waiters] fall into their places, and at another all the dishes are removed." These precise maneuvers continued throughout each course of the meal.\textsuperscript{124} Although the Virginian Jane Caroline North found the "air" of Saratoga's black waiters "truly disagreeable" because of their relaxed manner around whites, even she admitted that they were efficient in their work and "very civil." The precise orders and fashionable, handsome dress of "Mr. Maurice," the black headwaiter, further disturbed North. In italicizing the headwaiter's title, North expressed her surprise that an African-American held a position of such responsibility. Even more shocking was the social inversion that occurred at Saratoga: Southern planters, used to calling their slaves, regardless of age, by first names, suddenly found themselves using titles of respect for members of a race they considered inferior, and upon whom they now depended for service without the threat of violence. Southerners like North noted their discomfort with a situation where "the blacks are supreme."\textsuperscript{125} Ultimately, Southern reservations about the position of Saratoga's black waiters mattered little. By 1850 African-American waiters proved so adept that they dominated the profession in Saratoga Springs, where few whites served as waiters.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{124} Weld, \textit{A Vacation Tour in the United States and Canada}, 23.
\textsuperscript{125} Jane Caroline North diary, 25 and 30 August 1852, Pettigrew Family Papers, SHC (original emphasis).
\textsuperscript{126} All but two of the nineteen waiters listed in the 1850 Federal Census were of color. See Mary C. Lynn and William Fox, "The 1850 Census of Saratoga Springs: A Numerical Listing" (1991). Of the 19 waiters listed, there were twelve blacks, five mulattos, and two white males (aged 19 and seven years). There is no direct evidence of the racial makeup of waiters at the Virginia springs, although almost every primary source refers to black "servants." Hotels hired slaves to serve as waiters, and many guests brought their own personal slaves to wait on them at the springs (see Chapter 1). But they do not seem to have achieved the same level of expertise as Saratoga's African-American waiters. For a more detailed study of African-American waiters, see Mary Beth Young Armstead, "The History of Blacks in Resort Towns: Newport, Rhode Island and Saratoga Springs, New York, 1870-1930" (Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 1987).
Holding positions as waiters conferred a notable power on African-Americans at the springs. The head waiter at Saratoga’s colossal United States Hotel, Mason Morris, dispensed prize seats to guests with a quick “look over his list” of tables. “In such cases he would be compensated.”127 This “compensation” extended to the waiters, who often entered the dining room before the general public “to take possession of the most desirable places at the table” by either sitting in a chair or tilting it upward against the table for their patron.128 Likewise, at the Virginia springs waiters, who were described as “servants,” but were almost exclusively enslaved African-Americans, entered the dining room fifteen minutes before the diners and carved meats for those astute enough to realize that “without bribing a servant to attend to you particularly you can get no attendance except by accident.”129 Few wanted to risk the fate of the diner who “civilly requested” various foodstuffs three times, only to go unfed for forty-five minutes. He failed to realize that each of the waiters “had been bribed to wait on particular gentlemen; and if I had screamed at them loud enough to rupture a blood vessel, the knaves would have been as deaf as adders.” Here was one of the few settings in American life where a black could refuse to serve a white, or demand payment for the privilege, and not fear reprisal. The waiters exercised such a degree of power that guests at the Virginia springs soon realized that “bribery furnishes you with the best of what is to be got, and shifts the fighting at meals from the guests to their servants.” Waiters were even known to engage in fist fights in the kitchens to secure a prized dish like an apple pie for their favored

128 Strobia, “Journal of an Excursion to the North and East in the Summer of 1817,” 6 August 1817, p. 117-118, VHS; Coventry, Memoirs of an Emigrant, II: 1881, NYSLA.
129 William Bolling diary, 19 August 1841, p. 129, VHS.

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This arrangement allowed guests to project an air of refinement while still getting the food and service they wanted. But to reach this compromise, white guests had to acknowledge the power of their black waiters and accept their terms of service. It was a negotiation that many Southern planters had made many times before, but never in the direct, monetary exchange of the Virginia springs. Even at Saratoga, a Northern town frequented by whites who were less enthusiastic about slavery, guests contended with waiters

Impelled by eager thought of gain
Each choicer viand to obtain,
For those who wisely pay them best,
But laugh and jeer at all the rest.

Northern whites also had to negotiate with African-Americans for service at the springs. Guests in both regions found the system troublesome enough to protest the bribing system. So the waiters “soon hit upon a compromise of their own” that maintained their position, “which was to take the money without rendering the quid pro quo.” Even so, John H.B. Latrobe concisely described the mode of living at the springs: “Bribe high, live high.”

Bribing affected little change in the quality of food at the springs. Some visitors enjoyed “fine eating” while others termed the fare “abominable.” Whether the springs were “the great rendez-vous for all gastronomers” or a

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130 “Another Visit to the Virginia Springs, or the Adventures of Harry Humbug,” SLM I (September 1835): 774.
132 Sombre, Aquarelles, 37.
133 “Odds and Ends” journal, 1832-1835, Box 4, John H.B. Latrobe Family Papers, MdHS; Bristed, The Upper Ten Thousand, 122-123.
134 John Rossen, White Sulphur Springs, to Sister, Camden, South Carolina, 12 August 1849, GBA; W. Bolling diary, 19 August 1841, p. 129, VHS.
place that offered "no temptation to the epicure," mattered little. Display and competition dominated the dining hour. Meals were an opportunity to show off good manners, or the lack thereof, and the latest styles. As early as 1805 Elkanah Watson described the crowd at the fledging resort at Ballston, New York behaving "in the true french stile of sans souci." The company included "a rich variety" of guests "and an unusual display of servants in attendance, clad in elegance." Years later at White Sulphur Springs Roberta P. Burwell witnessed ladies wearing "as much finery as [they] choose to pack on" at the dinner table. Her own "elegant + abundant wardrobe" enabled her "to go out into the world a little." But Watson and Burwell described an increasingly rare scene. Despite the springs' reputation for high style, many called it a place where "there is no ceremony and little politeness observed." The Englishman Patrick Shirreff felt that the party at Saratoga "displayed few symptoms of refinement. A gentleman on the opposite side of Shirreff's table deliberately folded up the sleeves of his coat before commencing dinner, planted both elbows on the table, and swallowed his food voraciously, without once looking to the right or left." Even at the supposedly refined White Sulphur Springs "a man forgot himself so far as to walk across the table for something he wanted." John H.B. Latrobe declared, "Look sharper, eat fast, and forget good manners,'

135 Martin Duralde, Blue Sulphur Springs, to Uncle [Henry Clay], 1 July 1846, LoV; P.G., White Sulphur Springs, to Elizabeth Greene, New York, 7 July 18[??], GBA.
136 Elkanah Watson, 20 August 1805, Journal E: "Mixed Medley: Journal of remarks from Albany to Lake Champlain," Folder 2, Box 3, Elkanah Watson Papers, NYSLA; Roberta P. Burwell, White Sulphur Springs, to Mrs. Josiah Tidball, 12 August 1840, Section 17, Louise Anderson Patten Papers, VHS.
137 Coventry, Memoirs of an Emigrant, II: 1881, NYSLA.
138 Shirreff, A Tour Through North America, 57.
139 “Ann Overton Price's Book at the White Sulphur Springs, near Lewisburg, Va., 1828,” 14 August, GBA.
this is the motto of the dinner room at the White Sulphur.”\textsuperscript{140} The same was true for Saratoga, where a critic decreed that “elegance of manners in such a scene as this is quite out of the question.”\textsuperscript{141} One diarist criticized how the “high and mighty Lords of Creations, as they call themselves—will pick their teeth and stare confidently in your face” during meals.\textsuperscript{142} Too many springs visitors had not yet learned proper manners, and detracted from the refined atmosphere that polite guests preferred. Because the springs attracted Americans from various classes and regions, the standards of cosmopolitan, old-money guests were not necessarily met by nouveau riche Mississippi planters or Northern land speculators. Attended by people of disparate class backgrounds and a wide range of levels of refinement, dinner time at the springs seemed to resemble

\begin{quote}
A scene of strife and empty show, \\
Which folks there daily undergo, \\
Because, where people all convene, \\
One best may see, and can be seen.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

The show continued long into the afternoon. Dinner had served “as a sort of isthmus, uniting the freshness and brilliancy of the morning with the gayety of the evening.”\textsuperscript{144} Revelers crossed that isthmus with little delay, returning to their favorite morning amusement—riding through the countryside after a short rest and wardrobe change. Carriage rides and picnics in Virginia became more than the leisurely rides that characterized morning jaunts; they were more elaborate entertainments. One afternoon a “party of

\textsuperscript{140} “Odds and Ends” journal, 1832-1835, Box 4, John H.B. Latrobe Family Papers, MdHS. \\
\textsuperscript{141} Buckingham, \textit{America, Historical, Statistical, and Descriptive}, II: 442. \\
\textsuperscript{142} May diary, 6 June 1800, NYSHA. \\
\textsuperscript{143} Sombre, \textit{Aquerelles}, 38. \\
\textsuperscript{144} Windle, \textit{Life at Washington}, 173.
pleasure" at White Sulphur Springs hired a stage coach to ride together "at a
furious rate over the mountains." The party returned hours later "singing
songs, duets, relating anecdotes, in fact we were as excited a set of persons as
you would wish to see." Sometimes these excursions featured a hunt
amidst the surrounding mountains, which started "with hounds and
horns."

With little game left on the deforested sandy plains outside the village,
Saratoga’s riders created a much more elaborate spectacle in their daily jaunts.
Each afternoon the carriages assembled in front of the hotel piazzas along
Broadway, which were "crowded with guests" after dinner. Display, not the
destination, was the object. The ride itself might prove boring, "but then it is a
distinction here to ride out in one’s own carriage when so many stand to gaze
and admire, and envy the fortunate ones who ride, while they must go on
foot." Long excursions—which sometimes lasted overnight—to Lake
George, the Revolutionary War battlefields at Old Saratoga, or even the
nearby trout pond at Barhyte’s were not nearly as popular as the short dash to
Saratoga Lake. At a fashionable spot like Saratoga, "there is but one drive:
every body goes to the lake." One diarist noted that "multitudes flock daily to
the Lake" for riding, game dinners, rowing or sailing on the lake, and
steamboat rides to a sulphur spring on the south shore. But without the
"delightful and extensive prospect" of a place like Warm Springs, Virginia,

145 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 43; Louisa M. Collins, White Sulphur Springs, to Mercie
Harrison, Pagebrook, Virginia, 21 September 1837, Folder 1, Section 6, Byrd Family Papers,
VHS.
146 "Visit to the Virginia Springs," SLM I (July 1835): 614; "Journal of a Trip to the
Mountains..." SLM V (May 1838): 303.
148 Hoyt, “Journal of a Tour to Saratoga Springs,” 7 August 1827, SSCH; Latrobe, The Rambler
in North America, 133.
149 Curtis, Lotus-Eating, 115; Graham diary, 1 August 1848, margin of p. 92, N-YHS.
Saratoga's guests had "nothing very delightful in scenery to make them attractive." Instead, people went to the lake to sit on the porch of the hotels that dotted its shore and sipped sherry cobbler "not certainly because they needed sustenance of any sort, but from very idleness."\textsuperscript{150} The contrast of a peaceful setting, where "the light is tender, the air is soft, and the lapping of the water upon the pebbly shore," to the "city gala" at the hotels enchanted many visitors. The "monotonous banks" of Saratoga Lake provided the respite from the hectic pace of life so many visitors attempted to escape by coming to Saratoga, but found almost in spite of their efforts.\textsuperscript{151}

Not everyone ventured into the countryside after dinner. Many stayed at the hotel, where "the gentlemen lounge about the balconies, smoking cigars, while the ladies within read, net [sic] purses, or endeavor to extract music from a jingling piano."\textsuperscript{152} Sitting and lounging about the grounds of Saratoga's hotels seemed a popular amusement for Americans who found "all possible chairs" to make themselves comfortable.\textsuperscript{153} Ladies preferred to remain inside the hotels' drawing rooms and parlors "to chat, or [do handy-]work, and play at chess." They also played games like checkers, backgammon, and on occasion "Tableaux Vivants" (or charades) depicting such scenes as a Turkish slave market, prison inmates, Lady of the Lake, Taking the Veil, and Hamlet.\textsuperscript{154} Sometimes guests converted the common rooms "into a

\textsuperscript{152} Thomas Hamilton, \textit{Men and Manners in America} (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968 [1833]), II: 379.
\textsuperscript{153} Nichols, \textit{Forty Years of American Life}, 192.
\textsuperscript{154} Paulding, \textit{Letters From the South}, II: 235; May diary, 4, 9 and 21 June 1800, NYSHA; Coventry, \textit{Memoirs of an Emigrant}, II: 1006, NYSLA; St. George Tucker Coalter diary, 15 August 183?, Folder 40, Box IV, Group A, Brown, Coalter, Tucker Papers (I), SWM; J.K.L., Red Sweet Springs, to Charles, 5 September 1854, Section 12, Carrington Family Papers, VHS.
theatre—or something of the kind," where acrobats “danced upon the Wire and performed tumbling feats.” Later that same evening more formal entertainments like the play “the babes in the wood and a dance by Automatans completed the entertainments.”155 Ventriloquism, farces, magic tricks, and public lectures also amused the parlors’ occupants.156

People created their own amusements when plays and magic tricks did not occupy their attention. Playing or listening to music in the parlors was a favorite way of displaying one’s refinement and enjoying a few idle moments. Apparently many hotels, especially at the Virginia springs, furnished common rooms with pianos and encouraged guests to use them. On many days Sarah Virginia Hinton “went to the parlour + I played a few pieces on the piano.” The genius of providing pianos in the parlors was that they provided a gathering point, especially when guests’ bedrooms were so cramped and uncomfortable. Hinton reported that one afternoon she was “soon joined by Mrs. Magill + daughter, who are very good musicians. We passed an hour or two aplaying.”157 John Briggs, who always carried his flute, discovered that with “the ladies, being fond of music... I had not unfrequently the pleasure of spending my time in accompanying” them.158 Even those who lacked musical talent enjoyed listening to the impromptu concerts: almost every evening during her stay at Ballston Springs, Abigail May recounted that “we had quite a concert” by the hotel guests.159

The desire for musical performances proved so insatiable that hotel proprietors hired professional musicians to fill the program. Saratoga often

155 May diary, 17 August 1800, NYSHA.
156 Buckingham, America, Historical, Statistical, and Descriptive, II: 445.
157 Sarah Virginia Hinton diary, 25 September 1860, SWM.
158 Briggs, “Journal of a Trip to the Sweet Springs,” 1 August 1804, p. 18, VHS.
159 May diary, 29 July and 2 August 1800, NYSHA.
featured well-known performers like Mrs. Austin and Mr. Horn of the Park Theatre in New York City, who gave a vocal and instrumental concert at Congress Hall in 1828. These events, usually held in the ballroom after dinner or tea, were significant occasions when “the society collected” and many felt themselves “in some measure bound to attend.” Hotels in both Saratoga and Virginia also featured their own house band to provide a basic music service. These bands played beside the fountain in the morning, at noon, before dinner, at balls, and at various other times. Sometimes composed of black and sometimes white musicians (but never a mixture), the bands provided “very fine music gratis.” They also offered weekly concerts offered the band an excuse to “gain them half a dollar.” Even at this extra charge, many attended “for the sake of the music, which is delightful.”

Besides serving as venues for various performances, the springs’ public spaces functioned as the social center of springs life. Furnished with “carpeting, curtained, with two fine mirrors, the piano, tables and chairs,” it was within these parlors and ballrooms that “the main life at the Springs” took place. Those who frequented the public rooms “display[ed] a never ceasing scene of stile, commotion, display + enjoyment.” Within these interior spaces, women and men attempted to exhibit their refinement and sensibility. The ladies often engaged in fancy work not as a show of manners,
but as busy work while the real business of social interaction took place. At White Sulphur Springs, Grace Hunter wrote that “while in company I was tolerable busy, with my needle.”\textsuperscript{164} Even while on vacation, some women could not pass their time idly. Her counterparts at Ballston Spa, New York “knotted, netted, made tassels, fringe, cut watch papers—knit purses, wove watch chains braided hair,” or “drew patterns for Filagree work.”\textsuperscript{165} But this work was rarely done alone or silently. Women gathered in groups to busy themselves at fancy work while a member “read aloud while we sewed.”\textsuperscript{166} Groups created a “reading Plan” or “System” wherein different women (and occasionally male readers) took turns reading aloud while “the rest should be employ’d with the needle, shuttle or any thing else, and it is admissible to comment occasionally upon the work.” More than just a distraction, women found that “this expedient has a very happy effect, as it draws all the best part of the company together + is productive of that social intercourse which is not often enjoy’d at these places.”\textsuperscript{167} Women, needing to maintain their socially mandated reserve, found fancy work a convenient excuse to gather and socialize without appearing frivolous. Like the springs’ medical utility, needle work allowed women to enjoy themselves while sustaining their social virtue.

Ladies and gentlemen also read after dinner. An afternoon might be “spent in reading,” or, in the case of the pseudonymous Peregrine Prolix, passed “very pleasantly in the society of the sensible Matthew Bramble, his good tempered sister and the rest of his agreeable family.” Reading Tobias Smollet’s late eighteenth-century travel novel \textit{The Expedition of Humphrey

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{164} Grace Fenton Garnett Hunter journal, 1 August 1838, UVa.
\item \textsuperscript{165} May diary, 18 August, 3 August 1800, NYSHA.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Lyde diary, 12 July 1841, p. 37, Duke.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Mary Murray, “Journal kept on a Jaunt to Ballston + Saratoga,” 7 August 1825, N-YHS.
\end{itemize}
Clinker, which included visits to several English spas, must have illuminated the American springs experience. Luckily, Prolix found a copy of Clinker on his mantle; not everyone had such access to books. While at Sweet Springs, John Briggs discovered that “some very good books, were attainable here, from the library of a Gentleman, who very freely lent to those who wished them.” If they lacked this luxury, Mark Pencil advised visitors to the Virginia springs “to bring with them some amusing and entertaining books; they will find them very pleasant companions of a dull hour.” Otherwise they might end up like James Kirke Paulding, who called his “confinement [at the springs] more irksome” once he finished his last novel. St. George Tucker, who begged his wife to “send me a Fredericksburg paper + Inquirer + my Whig,” rued his “miserable oversight” in not bringing his own reading material “when I had plenty of room in my trunk for a dozen books + more.” With “no books or papers at all to amuse myself with,” he continued his plea: “Do not fail to send my papers regularly to this place + to the Salt Sulphur.” Another visitor reported waiting impatiently each week for the arrival of the National Intelligencer “as one expects a pleasant friend.” Reading materials provided a crucial part of any survival kit at the Virginia springs and a link to the world guests left behind. But it was not until the last stage of the springs boom in the 1850s that Virginia springs began to advertise “a Reading Room, furnished with a variety of newspapers,

168 May journal, 2 August 1800, NYSHA; Prolix, Letters Descriptive of the Virginia Springs, 61.
169 Briggs, “Journal of a Trip to the Sweet Springs,” 15 August 1804, p. 21, VHS.
170 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 37.
171 Paulding, Letters from the South, I: 203.
173 Jane Caroline North diary, 8 August 1852, Pettigrew Family Papers, SHC.
from all parts of the Union."\textsuperscript{174} In their reading selections, springs visitors sought not to escape the events of the outside world, but to remain connected with them. They might have looked for a romantic landscape free of the pressures of Jacksonian society, but only if they could keep up with the news.

Readers at Saratoga enjoyed easily available literature and periodicals as early as the 1820s, when Gideon Minor Davison, a local newspaper editor and prolific guidebook publisher, opened his Reading Room on Broadway, Saratoga's main street, just a short walk from the major hotels. Davison boasted over 100 newspapers from across the United States and Canada, as well as 2000 volumes of "well selected books for circulation, embracing the modern publication." To further lure readers to his premises, Davison kept a register of guests at the various hotels where people came to sign their names and discover whether a friend was in Saratoga or had already left. A social library in town offered additional reading opportunities. The Reading Room and library became favorite places for visitors "to beguile their few leisure hours" and a ready source of books and papers.\textsuperscript{175} After only one day at Saratoga Elizabeth Ruffin's brother "fled to the reading room" for entertainment. His sister followed his example and "found abundant amusement from my books."\textsuperscript{176} The urban atmosphere and commercial saturation of Saratoga that Southern writers so enjoyed attacking provided at least one luxury that the Virginia springs lacked for many years: ready access to reading.

\textsuperscript{174} Red Sweet Springs Broadside, 1856, VHS.
\textsuperscript{175} The Northern Traveller; Containing the Routes to Niagara, Quebec, and the Springs; with Descriptions of the Principal Scenes, and Useful Hints to Strangers. With Maps and Copperplates (New York: Wilder & Campbell, 1825), 110; Saratoga Springs Social Library record book, 1808-1834, SSCH; Gideon Minor Davison, The Traveller's Guide Through the Middle and Northern States, and the Provinces of Canada (Saratoga Springs: GM Davison, 1840), 144.
\textsuperscript{176} Elizabeth Ruffin diary, 9 and 14 August 1827, Harrison Henry Cocke Papers, SHC.
Hotel proprietors realized that riding, reading, and sewing failed to fill up the slow hours after dinner. In addition to these basic activities, they offered "every kind of amusement for the visitors" to fill in gaps in the daily schedule.\textsuperscript{177} Broadsides advertised the music, ballrooms, bowling alleys, billiard rooms, and "other places of amusement" that added "to the sources of healthful and agreeable relaxation" at various springs.\textsuperscript{178} Exhibitions of boxing and fencing were popular, as well as more elaborate tournaments meant to recreate medieval times and reinforce the elite status of Southern planters.\textsuperscript{179} Tournaments might elevate Southerners' opinion of their society, but outdoor games like shuffleboard provided a more utilitarian service by relieving the "tedium" produced "by the sameness of the life we lead."\textsuperscript{180} Billiards was also a favorite pastime. John Briggs stumbled upon a billiard table at Red Sweet Springs and "played for amusement an hour or two." He called billiards "the only game I ever was really attached to" because of "the exercise which is afforded the players, without fatiguing the attention... a very pleasurable amusement."\textsuperscript{181} Bowling provided another diversion, but occupied too much time in some observers' opinions. Sarcastically referring to the "great variety of amusements we have here," the Lexington Gazette described a typical day at the Virginia springs: "before breakfast we have ten pins; after breakfast, for a few moments, the graces, then until dinner ten pins.—After dinner a small touch at the graces, and from that until supper

\textsuperscript{177} William Reynold diary, 25 July 1841, West Virginia Collection, West Virginia University [WVU].
\textsuperscript{178} Montgomery White Sulphur Springs Broadside, 1856, SWM; Red Sweet Springs Broadside, 1856, VHS.
\textsuperscript{180} Newby diary, 19 August 1823, SHC; St. George Tucker Coalter diary, 15 August 183?, Folder 40, Box IV, Group A, Brown, Coalter, Tucker Papers (I), SWM.
\textsuperscript{181} Briggs, "Journal of a Trip to the Sweet Springs," 20 August 1804, p. 23, VHS.
ten pins, and occasionally from supper until eleven o'clock at night ten pins."\textsuperscript{182}

Saratoga, because of its status as an established village with a strong commercial base, offered its guests a much broader array of amusements than did the Virginia springs. Instead of a few hotel-organized activities, Saratoga's independently owned pleasure gardens, billiard rooms, bowling alleys, and saloons provided numerous options; their proprietors pledged "that no pains or expense shall be spared to render a visit to this fashionable establishment, agreeable."\textsuperscript{183} Unlike Virginia's hotels, which provided entertainment as a small part of their overall business that generated little direct revenue, Saratoga's independent amusements were the proprietor's sole source of revenue. With this incentive, they made their facilities as convenient and enjoyable as possible. For those who favored outdoor activities, the area around Congress Spring resembled a manicured park, with its outlying reaches containing active amusements. In one corner a "platform of flying horses," or carousel, "whirled [riders] around with great rapidity." Couples favored the circular railway, located on a small knoll directly behind Congress spring, where "gaily painted cars" seated two passengers and featured a mechanism that allowed the riders to propel the car themselves. Although "with much ease the gentleman gives power to the movement," many ladies were seen "helping their partners most vigorously." Soon the cars began "flying round with the velocity of the wind, and passing each other as feathered arrows." While some visitors praised the railway as "exhilarating," others criticized it as a means "to cheat people into exercise and out of money" and a place where "on payment of a fare, you may enjoy the privilege

\textsuperscript{182} Lexington Gazette, 20 August 1846, p. 2, col. 3.
\textsuperscript{183} "Rail Road Saloon" advertisement, Saratoga Whig, 27 July 1841, p. 3, col. 4.
of toiling like a galley slave.” In either case, at twelve and a half cents for three laps around the track, the circular railway’s builders soon recouped their $1150 investment in the apparatus.184

Just beyond Congress Park’s boundaries lay one the most popular and unique of Saratoga’s amusements, the Indian encampment. A group of Abenaki métis from northern New York and Québec performed war dances, war whoops, and mock scalping demonstrations. These exhibitions appeared “sufficiently savage and strange,” but the violin recital by an Indian dressed in European garb of “Scotch reels, Strathspeys, Paddy O’Rafterty, and such like civilized tunes” seemed out of place.185 To many Americans and Europeans, the Indians looked more civilized than savage. They wore spectacles and loose cotton clothing, and used metal needles and scissors in their sewing. Despite this acculturation, their command of English was “confined to the subject of currency. They told me exactly how many cents made a dollar; and on my taking up a watchpocket that one of them finished while I was there, she showed me which of the pieces of silver in my purse would pay for it.”186 The Indians’ “present degraded situation” of living in cloth and leather tents, making baskets for tourists, and generally appearing “very inferior” contrasted sharply with their once exalted condition when as “Lords of the soil they roamed the forest free.”187 No longer a viable part of society, Americans relegated Indians to the role of a sideshow attraction at America’s

187 Jane Caroline North diary, 26 August 1852, Pettigrew Family Papers, SHC.
summer resorts. As reminders of the springs historic and romantic past, the Indian encampments were a culturally perfect and profitable amusement.¹⁸⁸

The Indian groups were not the only entrepreneurs at the springs who attempted to loosen the wallets of fashionable visitors by providing diversions to pass a slow afternoon. Itinerant jewelers spread their wares on the lawns of the Virginia springs, much to the delight of the “ladies.” Resident physicians offered advice on taking the waters, while “transient artists—dentists—and phrenologists—and a corn doctor” all sought to attract customers.¹⁸⁹ Perhaps the most popular and successful of these practitioners were the phrenologists. Skilled in measuring the bumps and crevices of a subject’s head as indicators of personal traits and characteristics, phrenologists soared in popularity during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The arrival of a phrenologist merited mention in the local newspaper, as did his intention to visit “the most important of our Watering Places in prosecution of his business.”¹⁹⁰ The collection of famous, powerful, wealthy, and fashionable persons at the springs provided a perfect market for the phrenologists’ readings. The pseudonymous travel writer Mark Pencil reported in 1839 that “Phrenology thrives well at the Springs, not because it is the only head profession here—but from there being so many persons at all places like this, who are very willing sometimes, to be made pleased with themselves when the cost is so little.” At only one dollar per reading for analyses like that of the little boy with a “‘remarkably fine head—the organs are very prominent—benevolence very large, I would say, he was a man

¹⁸⁹ Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 40.
¹⁹⁰ Lexington Gazette 7 July 1853, p. 2, col. 3.
whose whole course of a long life had been devoted to charitable objects," the phrenologists examined heads from dinner until dusk. And as practitioners of what contemporaries viewed as a highly scientific, respectable profession, phrenologists found many customers among the self-conscious elite.191

Not all springs visitors adhered to the latest fad. Many, including a fair number of those who followed the phrenologists, held devout traditional Protestant religious beliefs. They conducted sporadic religious services "when a clergymen, willing to perform here, is to be found among the guests." The more formal church setting of city or tidewater congregations gave way to dancing rooms "consecrated to more hallowed purposes" on Sundays. Sizable groups of worshippers "assembled, and listened to a solemn and eloquent discourse" at White Sulphur Springs in 1835.192 Some Saratoga hotels like the Union Hall developed a reputation as a "pious house" and offered evening prayers and hymns. But as "fashion began its reign and music invaded the parlor, dancing and prayer" clashed, leading to the cessation of daily worship. Instead, hotel guests "began to pour forth their several congregations" in the village each Sunday morning. The more settled, permanent society at Saratoga supported the year-round religious establishments that the Virginia springs could not.193

Ministers in both regions kept things "primitive and fraught with old associations, and recollections of by-gone times, when our fathers worshipped God without any of those striking aids to devotion, which the increasing wealth, luxury and improvements of society have established." This nostalgia

191 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 146-147. For an interesting discussion of phrenology in the nineteenth century, see Charles Colbert, A Measure of Perfection: Phrenology and the Fine Arts in America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
for simple religion extended to Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Congregational ministers drawn from the hotels’ guests, but not to the traveling Methodist preachers who occasionally visited the springs. A simple sermon and hymns sung in couplets after the words were read aloud characterized the service. Saratoga’s religious visitors gathered at the pious Union Hall, “where it is not considered unfashionable by the guests to spend the evening in their great room, singing hymns and praying.” The anonymous newspaper columnist “Netta,” who spared no ink in criticizing other aspects of springs society, found it refreshing “to see so goodly a number of visitors engaged in the old fashioned custom of singing hymns, listening to short exhortations, and joining in thanksgiving and prayer” until ten in the evening. The salubrious climate and health-giving waters of the springs placed many invalids in a mood to acknowledge “the beneficence of the Almighty.” Even if the sermon proved “indifferent,” pious springs visitors could spend “a pleasant day in wandering in the wood and communing with my God in solitude.” Many enjoyed themselves “more in our hour spent in this way than in ten attending dry doctrinal preaching.” Amidst the peaceful mountains and vales of the Virginia springs it seemed “peculiarly appropriate, that while resorting to these waters for healing the diseases of the body, we should also have recourse to the wells of salvation which have been opened in the house of David for the diseases of the soul.”


196 “Journal of a Trip to the Mountains, Caves, and Springs of Virginia,” SLM IV (June 1838): 386; St. George Tucker, White Sulphur Springs, to Mrs. Judith H. Coalter, Wilderness P.O.,
the Second Great Awakening, when personal salvation and accountability gained increasing importance, paying attention to spiritual matters at the springs was part of a larger piety.

But this righteous remnant composed only a small portion of springs visitors. Almira Hathaway Read felt that of the hundreds at Saratoga in the years before widespread revivals, "but few are disposed to pass an hour in divine service. The pleasure parties and balls every evening in this village engross the attention of the old and young, sick and well, and this village place I fear will prepare more souls for destruction than these efficacious waters will ever heal infirm bodies."197 The Virginia springs faced the same lack of religious zeal. With dancing in the ballroom every night, Eliza Law worried that "religion is very little thought of in this place, and surely, it ought to be made a place of prayer, where we all come in search of health."198 At many springs the ballroom doubled as the chapel, a situation that caused one observer to remark, "How strange! that the same room should be used for purposes so widely variant. Six days it is used for the amusements and follies of the gay & young & one day in seven for Divine Services."199

Indeed, the balls and hops held at the springs signified both the excesses of the irreligious guests and the achievements of fashionable, refined society. After passing the afternoon in riding, reading, or a variety of outdoor amusements, visitors took a brief meal (either tea or supper) before the day's final race. That event began at twilight when "the whole grounds" at White Sulphur Springs" were “interspersed with company, promenading, laughing,

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198 Eliza Law, Red Sulphur Springs, to William Law, 14 August 1835, Folder 3, Box 2, 1825-1845, William Law Correspondence, Duke.
199 Trant diary, 23 August 1836, p. 11, GBA.
chatting, and many anticipating the coming pleasures of the ball."  
Saratoga’s gathering places, “the spacious Collonade[s],” were “thronged with the five hundred guests of the house, who pace to and fro for an hour” before the beginning of the ball.  

Dances, although they were “the one great article in the code of fashionables to which all other amusements or occupations were subordinate,” were not a daily part of the social regimen.  
In Saratoga Springs, the various houses shared the responsibility for organizing the events, with the principal hotels hosting one hop and one ball each week. The term “ball” indicated a more formal affair “got up by subscription, a list being sent around to each house and the expense of refreshments &c. is paid by the subscribers in equal proportions.” Hops lacked the glamour of balls and were “considered a family dance and is confined to the boarders in the house.” Others attended by invitation to augment the number of dancers and “the hilarity of the occasion.”  

Dancers arrived to discover the ballroom lighted up to accommodate “the mirthful meeting of the young and the gay.” The hotel proprietors or ball subscribers provided drinks like champagne, sangaree, wine and “other refreshing beverages,” as well as ice cream and blanc-mange, to help create a festive atmosphere. At the Virginia springs a promenade preceded the ball proper. One woman found that “the promenade before the dance was better
worth looking at than any thing I ever saw.” A double archway “bound with evergreens, and stuck full of candles” divided the ballroom in half as promenaders processed below. Into the room marched “the Lady Patroness... on the arm of the gentleman who has the most stock in the Bank, followed in couples by all the gentlemen and ladies who intend to dance or play wallflower.” Once the crowd had entered “a platform was placed under one of [the arches] for the music, and then the dancing began.”

House musicians played in the ballroom before the ball proper and once the dancing began. Some springs employed white musicians, but the majority of bands featured black performers. Nathaniel Parker Willis described a scene at a Saratoga ball where “The black musicians ‘vex their instruments,’ and keep time with their heads and heels,” an image repeated at the Virginia springs, where a newspaper reported that during the ball “Cuffee nods his head and stomps his foot and works his elbow” while playing the tune. One commentator went so far as to declare that “the colored race of Virginia being born fiddlers, a musician is never out of the way.” Many smaller springs, who might not be able to afford a full band, actually chose to employ one or two of these “born fiddlers” to provide their establishment’s music. Like the hotel waiters, as skilled musicians some African-Americans held prestigious positions at the springs.

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207 Willis, American Scenery, 21; Lexington Gazette, 12 August 1836, p. 1.

208 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 63; Dibrell’s Springs and the declining Sweet Springs both employed black fiddlers instead of an entire band (W. Bolling diary, 19 August 1841, VHS; Newby diary, 16 August 1823, p. 60, SHC). See also “Journal of a Trip to the Mountains, Caves, and Springs of Virginia,” SLM IV (April 1838): 262. W. Bolling diary, 19 August 1841, VHS; Dandridge Spotswood diary, 17 July 1848, p. 12, VHS. At Saratoga the all-black Johnson’s Band held a virtual monopoly on lucrative engagements. Johnson and others popularized the ball music to such a degree that publishers issued sheet music of tunes like “Saratoga Galop” and
But unlike the waiters, who extracted a modicum of social power from the diners, black musicians only provided ambient noise for the display of style and refinement during balls. With less direct interaction with white guests, the black musicians exercised less social power. At the grand and fancy balls ladies and gentlemen thronged the floor in "radiant clusters of loveliness!" creating "such a display as no one of my acquaintance has ever seen before."\(^\text{209}\) At these formal occasions everyone understood that "more dressing [is required], and a greater degree of etiquette prevails."\(^\text{210}\) The dancers formed "a parade of finery, arranged with all the taste of a graceful Coquetry," which featured fancier dresses, more elaborate hairstyles, and "jewels that sparkled amid fine laces and rich silks were only outshone the beauty of those they adorned."\(^\text{211}\)

Once the actual dancing began, the center of the hall seemed alive with dancers performing a "waltz where the gentlemen whirl their partners round and round, and then as suddenly leave them and whirl away in their turn, leaving the lady to overtake them in the crowd."\(^\text{212}\) Individual couples separated themselves from other dancers by their superior skills. At one gala two newlyweds "whirled around exactly twice while every other couple was making one turn, and the gentleman's feet and legs had to fly with great


\(^\text{210}\) The Diary of Philip Hone, 19 July 1839, p. 406.


\(^\text{212}\) Windle, *Life at the White Sulphur Springs*, 33-34.
rapidity." In an ideal figure "the beaux bow to the fair ladies, who coyly give their hand, and are led out on the floor." The ultimate goal of any dance was to earn the praise of society, as did one lady at the Virginia springs: "how neatly the little foot is pointed—how gracefully she holds forth her arms—how majestically she moves along just touching the floor over which she flies—how swimmingly she turns her rounded form!"213

Saratoga's ladies rivaled the belles of the Virginia springs for dancing supremacy. One evening during the summer of 1800 Abigail May danced nearly "every dance but one" with a variety of partners. Another night she "called (Hob Nob) with the Doctr which was very much admired never having been danced here." May completed her performance by telling a friend that she had invented the dance. The friend "proclaimed it and it was buz'd round the room quickly—one couple stood after another to dance 'Miss Mays dance'—till at last quite ashamed and tired I begged to sit down."214 By introducing and calling the dance, May succeeded in displaying her style and refinement, to the envy of her competitors. For Saratoga ladies like May nothing equaled the ballroom for making an impression. As one commentator noted,

This, this is the hour, and this the scene,
Where MODA reigns despotic queen!
Here is her triumph most complete,
Her sweetest joy, her high estate....
The ball, her highest worship claims,—
The ball,—her waking thoughts, her dreams!
In this she never yields, or tires,

214 May diary, 21 July and 22 August 1800, NYSHA.
In this, alone, she perseveres.
Such joys her highest hopes comprise,
And such her only paradise.
E'en heaven itself she would forswear
If taught there was no dancing there.\textsuperscript{215}

Balls were, above all, a space of contested social status. During the height of Saratoga's season, "the wealthiest persons in the country were there congregated, each trying to outvie the other in magnificence and costliness of apparel."\textsuperscript{216} Style so ruled the scene that, in one observer's opinion, "the votaries of fashion outnumber the pursuers of health."\textsuperscript{217} Dancers at the springs attempted to exhibit their refined manners and elevated social status in "a fine display of refinement of the beau mond... strutting round in high life + polished manners." This was not an idle observation, but a sign of the growing sophistication of American society. Where once country dances, four-handed reels and cutting in and out of dances prevailed, Elkanah Watson "was delighted to notice the progress of refined manners, the graces of Paris, taught by french dancing masters, exhibited by many elegant Ladies, + well dressed gentlemen in dancing cotillions" at Ballston Springs in 1805.\textsuperscript{218}

At this early date the springs lacked the material conditions for refinement: elaborate hotels, grand ballrooms, tree-lined paths, manicured lawns, and ornate fountains, as established by English models. But the springs already possessed the desire to be genteel, to separate the barbarous from civilized.

\textsuperscript{215} Sombre, Aquerelles, 43-44.
\textsuperscript{216} Potter, A Hair-Dresser's Experience in High Life, 72.
\textsuperscript{217} William Elliott diary, 6 August 1823, Elliott-Gonzales Papers, SHC.
The standard of refinement and ideology of politeness existed long before the springs did, and provided a model of behavior that springs society tried to equal. When Virginians boasted that their glamorous balls and famous visitors lent their springs “precisely the same finery, fashion and pretension as at Saratoga,” they desired not only to outperform their rivals, but also to display the symbols of refinement they had achieved.\(^{219}\) No slouch when it came to style, at the Virginia springs “a fashionable crowd in most of the paraphernalia of their order” abounded.\(^{220}\) They had perfected polite society, the ultimate goal of any social gathering of worth in antebellum America.

The problem was that perfection never lasted, and neophytes constantly spoiled the accomplishments of the elite. Among the fashionable crowd at the springs lurked many unrefined visitors, especially the crowds of gamblers who marred the polite discourse of springs society. As early as 1791, the French traveler Ferdinand Bayard reported informal gambling on billiards and an efficient faro bank at Bath, Virginia.\(^{221}\) Travelers throughout the early nineteenth century echoed his description. Cards seemed to prevail at the Virginia springs, where “devious gamblers” and “black-guards” practiced their “pernicious games.”\(^{222}\) Saratoga offered more diversions besides gambling, but bets on bowling, faro games, dice, roulette wheels and all of the other “apparatus and paraphernalia of gambling and dissipation” could still

\(^{220}\) Windle, *Life at Washington*, 188.  
be found.\textsuperscript{223} While Saratoga's gamblers remained fairly discreet, proprietors of several Virginia springs actually welcomed gambling at their establishments. According to the \textit{Southern Literary Messenger}, "a considerable portion of the grounds at White Sulphur Springs are set off and appropriated to faro and billiard tables and other games, where regular professionals of the low art of gambling are regularly quartered." Two professional gamblers at Sweet Springs owned a double cabin characterized as "the best building on the premises" where they plied their trade.\textsuperscript{224} Around the turn of the nineteenth century, the admitted gambler Robert Bailey started keeping a faro bank at Berkeley Springs and managed the Sweet Springs, two of Virginia's most prestigious resorts at the time, making "several thousand dollars... on fair and honorable principles."\textsuperscript{225} Virginia's hotel proprietors allowed gamblers to thrive, which earned them criticism from commentators like the English visitor George Featherstonhaugh, who felt that "every direct encouragement is given to vice, and inducements held out to the vilest fellows in the country to flock to the place."\textsuperscript{226} But Featherstonhaugh found that few Virginians shared his disgust. As T.H. Breen has written, during the colonial period gambling constituted an acceptable activity in the lives of Virginia's planter class. Gambling at the nineteenth-century Virginia springs was not a vice, as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{224} "Journal of a Trip to the Mountains, Caves and Springs of Virginia," \textit{SLM} IV (June 1838): 386; Newby diary, 19 August 1823, p. 63, SHC; Reynold diary, White Sulphur Springs, 25 July 1841, p. 28, WVU. Reynold estimated their seasonal rent for the house at $6,000.
\item \textsuperscript{225} The Life and Adventures of Robert Bailey, from his Infancy up to December, 1821. Interspersed with Anecdotes, and Religious and Moral Admonitions. Written by Himself (Richmond: J. & G. Cochran, 1822), 69, 212.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Featherstonhaugh, \textit{Excursion through the Slave States}, I: 79.
\end{itemize}
Featherstonhaugh would have it, but rather “a celebration of leisured wealth,” a sentiment that Saratoga’s visitors did not share.227

Even so, the risks were great for the gamblers. Virginia law had hardened since colonial times, and viewed gambling unfavorably. It imposed “remarkably severe” penalties, including prison time, on gamblers. In this hostile climate, most gamblers preferred to play it safe and be “very cautious in their movements.” The Watson brothers operated a gambling enterprise at Sweet Springs during the 1823 season in a neatly appointed two-story house that appeared completely normal from the outside. They reportedly kept a billiard table on the second floor of the house and posted doorkeepers at the entrances “to refuse admittance to all, except the visitants who are known to be from a distance.”228 Such precautions prevented legal trouble but may have curtailed business. A decade later the card sharp (and Kentucky Senator Henry Clay’s nephew) Martin Duralde reported disappointedly that “at the Red I did not play a single card. No one seemed disposed to partake of that kind of enjoyment.” Others worried that the professional gamblers might “starve for want of trade, unless they meet more encouragement than the present water-drinking folks seem inclined to give them.”229 But this reluctance to gamble lasted only a short time. By the time he arrived at White Sulphur Springs a few days later Duralde found “a fine party playing” and urged his partner to

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228 Newby diary, 19 August 1823, pp. 64-65, SHC; Saratoga’s gambling laws addressed the commingling of gaming and liquor, an intolerable vice in the opinion of the village fathers. The village charter expressly forbid gaming in taverns and passed a number of ordinances enforcing this restriction (“Act Incorporating the Village of Saratoga Springs, 17 April 1826, SSCH; Village Board of Trustees Minutes, 5 April 1860, p. 188, 23 April 1851, p. 207, 22 April 1852, p. 232, SSCH). 

“come over as soon as possible,” predicting that “we can clear two or three hundred a day.”

Duralde’s earnings paled in comparison to the lifelong successes of Robert Bailey, who estimated he earned “upwards of half a million” dollars by gambling. Bailey’s secret was simple: “my orders to my dealers always was to suffer no person to bet but gentlemen, and to exclude all common persons.” His dealers “were never to be suspected of unfairness in conducting the game, for I had much rather lose the whole bank, than any gentleman should be dissatisfied.” Bailey’s gambling operation conformed to the standards of refinement, gentlemanly conduct, and class homogeneity that ruled Virginia society.

Other gamblers acted far less honorably. Springs resorts in both sections of the nation crawled with gentlemen “who bore the reputation of being rich, but it was far from so.” Unlike the planters and businessmen who made their money in crops, slave trading, commerce, or manufacturing, “the club-room defrayed [professional gamblers’] expenses.” Young “greenhorns” lost enough money to keep the experienced gamblers “in style as long as they pleased.” The gamblers seemed to one observer “like so many spiders setting their nets in different corners to catch the silly flies who buzz about on bank-note wings.” And apparently the spiders caught their share: Mr. Lavin from Baltimore arrived at the springs in a splendid carriage but quickly “fell in amongst the gamblers.” He eventually “lost so much that he is obliged to

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230 Martin Duralde, White Sulphur Springs, to Colonel Z.N. Oliver, 25 July 1846, LoV.
231 The Life and Adventures of Robert Bailey, 64, 215; According to Breen gambling among the planter elite reinforced class lines and reduced competition between society’s leaders. Bailey’s hesitancy to upset “any gentleman” may have adhered to the polite tone of upper-class Virginia gambling (Breen, “Horses and Gentlemen,” 256-257).
232 Potter, A Hair-Dresser’s Experience in High Life, 81.
233 Edmund Randolph, Martin’s Hotel, White Sulphur Springs, to Marianne O’Meade, Elk Hill, Amelia, Virginia, 4 August 1840, p. 7, Edmund Randolph Papers, 1840-1860, VHS.
offer his equipage for sale." This left his formerly stylish wife feeling
"melancholy... they say she looks wretchedly."234

People objected to those gamblers who came to the springs "for the
express purpose of preying upon the company who support this
establishment," its wealthy visitors. Gamblers dressed flashily and possessed
no connections to "known families." They merely stood by and looked for
opportunities "of inveigling the young men away to rouge et noir."235 But
many at the springs enjoyed playing cards. John Briggs reported gambling
after dinner for small stakes which "never exceeded I believe 1/4th $." This
diversion failed to interrupt his usual exercise, spring water drinking, or early
rising. Briggs could safely say, "I have little fondness for cards." He saw cards
as a necessary evil at the springs, "so remote from any large Town, and where
so many idlers are collected."236 Others were far less ambivalent, calling
gambling "a blot on the otherwise fair picture" at the springs and "a
disgraceful and ignominious act."237 One visitor compared the professional
gamblers to "Vultures + other birds of prey. They seem to me, continuous
upon the watch, to entrap the young + thoughtless part of mankind who visit
these places + who are possess’ed of a quarter stock of cash + short of
experience in the ways of the world."238 The problem was not so much the
gambling itself, but the fact that it occurred between social un-equals, which
threatened to upset the delicate balance of springs society. Virginia society

234 Grimball diary, 15 July 1835, I: 26, SHC.
235 Featherstonhaugh, Excursions Through the Slave States, I: 79-80.
236 Briggs, "Journal of a Trip to the Sweet Springs," 1 and 15 August 1804, pp. 15-16, 21, VHS.
237 "Journal of a Trip to the Mountains, Caves and Springs of Virginia," SLM IV (June 1838): 386.
238 Newby diary, 19 August 1823, p. 65, SHC.
winked at gambling, but only if the “deep play” was between people of equal social rank who faced no potential social loss from their actions.239

The gamblers, despite the approbation of some, cut a popular figure at the springs. They sat at table with the most refined visitors, were “invited to all the pleasure parties, and assumed an air of importance” among the society.240 At Sweet Springs the Watson brothers presented a “genteel appearance + modern + retiring manners.” They were “very modest + unassuming amidst the crowd,” making pleasant conversation with the hotel’s other guests.241 Likewise, the faro banker Robert Bailey attempted to transcend his reputation as a gambler by establishing himself in the hotel business at Berkeley Springs. He “frequently gave parties over in the grove,” which “were attended as heretofore by the most wealthy and respectable.” He hoped that these parties both increased his standing as a refined gentleman and brought “much custom to my bank.” To a certain extent, they did: eventually Bailey gained the management of balls at Berkeley Springs, an honor reserved for the most genteel members of society. But word reached the ladies that Bailey was a gambler, and they soon refused to dance with him. When even the newcomers declined his invitations to whirl about the hall, Bailey stormed into the ball-room, purchased the slave who played the fiddle for the dances, and hauled him out by the collar. Bailey demonstrated that in this instance, money could, quite literally, buy refinement. Without a fiddler,

239 See Breen, “Horses and Gentlemen,” 256-257. In general, nineteenth-century society viewed gambling as a vice that threatened the political economy of the new nation. If working men wasted their wages on lotteries, dice, and card games, savings and hard work, foundation blocks of the economic rationality central to the market economy, would diminish in value. Without these bases of republican virtue and commerce, social chaos seemed likely, at least in the opinion of reformers (Fabian, Card Sharps, Dream Books, & Bucket Shops, 2-4, 40). On the social structure of gambling, see Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” in The Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973), 412-453.
240 Bayard, Travels of a Frenchman, 51.
241 Newby diary, 19 August 1823, p. 64, SHC.
the ladies could not display their accomplishments through dance. The next day several ladies addressed notes to Bailey asking for his (and his fiddler’s) attendance at the ball that evening; he responded by insisting that he had injured his ankle and was unable to dance for the rest of the season. Bailey’s complaint rose not from the ladies’ refusal to dance with him, but from their insistence on terming him a “gambler.” He declared that he was no such person, preferring to call himself a “sportsman.” The difference lay in the fact that gamblers pursued gaming without honor or honesty with the goal of exploiting “subjects of prey.” He, however, was a sportsman—what he defined as “a high minded liberal gentleman, attached to amusements regardless of loss or gain.” As a sportsmen, Bailey guided his actions by honor. To prove his position as a gentleman and defend his honor, Bailey fought duels against men who accused him of being a mere gambler and welched on their debts. 242 He had to assert and fight for his status, something that a true upper-class, refined gentleman would never do.

While gambling was certainly present, and even prevalent, at other springs, it never gained the open acceptance it enjoyed around the turn of the century at Berkeley Springs. The company of the Watson brothers, who attempted to cultivate a respectable gambling house at Sweet Springs in 1823, was something that “all seem to avoid.” People rearranged their seats at the dinner table to avoid sitting near the Watsons. Even when forced to sit directly opposite the gamblers, guests would “exchange no civilities

242 The Life and Adventures of Robert Bailey, 64-75, 212; Bailey’s attempts to gain admittance to the elite ultimately failed, as did those of almost all gamblers at the springs. Too great of a stigma surrounded gambling, even at the relatively permissive Virginia springs, for professionals to ever achieve social acceptance (Lewis, “Ladies and Gentlemen on Display,” 334-336, 462; Fabian, Card Sharps, Dream Books, & Bucket Shops, 18-23, 37). Ferdinand Bayard’s 1791 account is one major exception, but took place well before the springs gained popularity with more than a select fraction of American society (Travels of a Frenchman, 51-52).
whatever” with the brothers.\textsuperscript{243} The hesitancy of many to associate with the Watsons was part of a larger trend away from gambling and toward respectability at the Virginia springs. Over the course of the nineteenth century refinement made gambling, and seedy characters like the Watsons or Robert Bailey, increasingly unacceptable in polite society. Gambling changed from a prevalent, open practice to something undertaken behind closed doors with as much discretion as possible. As James Kirke Paulding wrote, few gentleman travelers carried their small bundle of clothes in saddlebags, “as it is not customary to dress fine at the Springs, or elsewhere: those who do, are apt to be taken for Black Legs, or Horse Jockeys.”\textsuperscript{244} The mere mention of a gambling habit could, by 1859, ruin a gentleman’s reputation. A correspondent in the Lexington \textit{Gazette} wrote a detailed description of the gambling practices of several Louisiana gentlemen at Red Sweet Springs, but ended his article by exercising journalistic restraint, saying, “I could give the names, but forbear.”\textsuperscript{245} Others practiced no such discretion in their attempts to eradicate gambling as early as 1838. That year J.W. Hevenson wrote a long, plaintive letter to Richard Singleton, the arbiter of society at the White Sulphur Springs, regarding the “malignant + groundless aspersion” on his character. Anonymous informants had accused Hevenson of cheating at cards, a charge he dismissed as “blackhearted + vile.” He insisted that his “resolution of not touching a card, has been preserved inviolable.” Hevenson was so desperate to redeem his reputation that he proposed “a life hereafter entirely + strictly free in all points from dissipation + cards in any shape” if Singleton would refute the allegations and rehabilitate Hevenson’s good

\textsuperscript{243} Newby diary, 19 August 1823, p. 63-64, SHC.
\textsuperscript{244} Paulding, \textit{Letters from the South}, I: 39.
\textsuperscript{245} Lexington \textit{Gazette}, 4 August 1859, p. 2, col. 7.
During the anti-gambling campaign, a leading Southern journal urged springs proprietors to remove the "material stain" of gambling from their establishments and concentrate on promoting the healthful benefits of the waters. Even inveterate gamblers like Robert Bailey expressed remorse for their lives of turpitude. Despite his frequent efforts to reform his ways, Bailey continued to gamble. Always on the cusp of success, he estimated having "won in the course of [faro] banking upwards of half a million of money, all of it gone from whence it came." Gambling provided both a quick route to partial social success and a road to ruin. As such, it threatened the social order of established wealth that dominated springs society. It represented in the most obvious form the threat to established money and society that less scrutable and barely legitimate wealth posed. Where in the colonial period Virginian's tolerated gambling because it transpired only among equals, by the 1830s the social changes of the Market Revolution and the cotton booms allowed men of equal financial, but not social, rank to bet. In clamping down on gambling, Virginia's established elite attempted to solidify its position and prevent the kind of social mobility that might undermine its status.

Despite the allure of gambling and the best efforts of springs proprietors and adventuresome guests to devise various amusements, James Kirke Paulding's statement that "Bathing, drinking the waters, eating, and sleeping, are the principal occupations; and for recreation, they sometimes dance,"

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246 J.W. Hevenson, Lexington, to Richard Singleton, White Sulphur Springs, 1 August 1838, Folder 22, 1838-1839, Box II, Singleton Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library.
247 "Journal of a Trip to the Mountains, Caves and Springs of Virginia," SLM IV (June 1838): 386.
remained true. Daily life repeated "the same round of dissipation," "the same unvarying routine" of activities "ad libitum, ad infinitum." Paulding referred sarcastically to "an agreeable variety of eating, drinking, and sleeping—sleeping, eating, and drinking—and drinking, eating, and sleeping" at the springs. Another diarist complained "I believe I might almost copy any one journal, and it would do for any other day. The same routine of walking to the spring, talking a little (or rather a great deal), frequently reading a little, and speaking to passing acquaintances, passes off the time." The problem was that in leading the repetitious, boring life that they desired at the springs, Americans went against their society's hectic pace. Referring to "Saratoga's idly busy throng," the author and social critic Clement Clarke Moore asked how could they could

...chase away... the horrors of ennui,

But for the three great epochs of the day,

The happy hours of Breakfast_Dinner_Tea? Many visitors could not have supplied Moore with an answer. They complained that they could "scarcely remember how the day was spent, in doing little or nothing." One guest recounted the long list of activities she engaged in during the day only to add that "when I get into my bed I can but think how the day has been spent." Time seemed "to pass very heavily,"

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252 Hunter diary, 6 August 1838, p. 67, UVa.  
253 Clement Clarke Moore, "A Trip to Saratoga," 1844, N-YHS.  
254 Hunter diary, 26 July 1838, p. 62, UVa.  
255 Sarah Rutherfoord, Warm Springs, to John Rutherfoord, Richmond, 12 July 1811, Folder 1810-1824, Box 1, 1754-1843, John Rutherfoord Papers, Duke.
and hours to “hang heavily” at the springs.256 Visitors described activities that succeeded in “driving ‘dull care away,’” “wore away” time or “beguiled the hours.”257 The goal was not to find enjoyable and productive activities to fill the day, but rather “to drive away the ennui that always must attend a residence at a fashionable watering-place.”258 Many found the hunt for time-killing activities so pointless that they agreed with John Munford’s assessment “of the unprofitable life I have lead” at the springs.259 In Abigail May’s words, “we read, eat, drank, talk’d, walk’d, and went to bed at night one Day older, but very little if any wiser than we rose in the morning.”260

Life at the springs was “unprofitable” because, in the opinion of Grace Fenton Hunter, “nothing could be more monotonous than the time here.”261 Another observer considered the daily routine at Saratoga “so unvarying, the scenes so little diversified + the conversation so stale, that one even tires of the execution.”262 James Kirke Paulding was shocked by the “trouble people take sometimes to gain amusement, when they set out on purpose. I have know many, at these places, expressly set apart for the reception of people

256 Windle, Life at Washington, 198; Louisa M. Collins, White Sulphur Springs, to Mercie Harrison, Pagebrook, Virginia, 21 September 1837, Folder 1, Section 6, Byrd Family Papers, VHiS; Robert Carter Berkeley diary, 2 August 1826, VHS; “Visit to the Virginia Springs, No. 1,” SLM I (June 1835): 545; Elizabeth Ruffin diary, 22 August 1827, Harrison Henry Cocke Papers, SHC. At least one visitor used the same language regarding time, but in a positive tone: “I have not found time hangs very heavily on my hands as yet” (Ellen Tazewell [Wirt] Vass McCormick, White Sulphur Springs, to H. Coalter Cabell, Lexington, 23 September 1833, Folder 8, Section 18, Cabell Family Papers, VHS).
257 Fauquier White Sulphur Springs broadside, 1857, SWM; May diary, 7 June, 20 August 1800, NYSHA.
258 Gilpin, The Northern Tour, 64; Windle, Life at Washington, 177. See also Netta, “First Impressions of Saratoga, No. 4,” National Era 13, 661 (1 September 1859): 1; May diary, 8 August 1800, NYSHA. Paulding refers to “modes of killing time” in Letters from the South (I: 169), and Washington Irving termed the springs as “that notorious slaughter-house of time” (“Style at Ballston,” 256).
259 John D. Munford, Fauquier Springs, to George W Munford, Woodville, Virginia, 14 September 1838, Folder 1837-1838, Box 2, Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke.
260 May diary, 8 June 1800, NYSHA.
261 Hunter diary, 19 and 24 July 1838, pp. 58, 61, UVa.
262 Gilliam diary, 16 August 1816, p. 56, LoV.
who don't know what to do with themselves, who actually took more pains to keep awake all day, than a poor man does to maintain his family.”

The strain of the effort showed: there was “nothing in the whole compass of yawns like a Saratoga yawn, if you hear one when a gaper is off his guard.”

Drowsiness seemed the “almost universal” state of being at the springs.

Though society might occasionally appear jovial on the surface, upon closer examination “the people all look ennuied, nobody likes the place.”

Many guests criticized the springs as unproductive. With the constant round of walks, games, books, meals, and dances, people had no “trouble of thinking what shall be done with the hour.” Instead, “days weeks and months slip away imperceptibly.”

Clement Clarke Moore wrote that his routine at the springs made him feel

... like a squirrel cag'd, who, though he bound,

And whirl about his wheel, yet ne'er advances.

Many years earlier Washington Irving had sarcastically described his time at the springs as “a delicious life of alternate lassitude and fatigue, of laborious dissipation, and listless idleness, of sleepless nights, and days spent in that dozing insensibility which ever succeeds them.”

This waste of leisure time troubled moralists like Timothy Dwight, who feared that the annual gatherings at the springs “will contribute very little to the melioration of the

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265 F. Stone, White Sulphur Springs, to Thomas D. Stone, Charles County, Maryland, 25 August 1857, GBA.
266 Louisa Elizabeth (Cabell) Carrington, Hot Springs, to Henry Carrington, Charlotte Courthouse, 3 September 1831, Folder 1, Section 1, Carrington Family Papers, VHS.
267 May diary, 8 August 1800, NYSHA.
268 Moore, “A Trip to Saratoga,” 32, N-YHS.
human heart, or to the improvement of human matters."270 Other shared his concerns. While at Saratoga, Catherine Maria Sedgwick heard a sermon instructing that “our leisure hours were precisely those for which we should be held to the strictest account,” instructions that the “busy crowd of idlers” at Saratoga ignored. They appeared to Sedgwick to be “throwing away the stuff that life is made of!” Unproductive, frivolous time lacked moral purpose.271 Sedgwick succeeded in expressing a deep-seeded guilt among Americans for enjoying themselves, a sentiment that many at the springs shared. One woman felt dismay at “the distressing idea, that few, perhaps not one of the gay crowd here have performed the important duty for which life is bestowed.” Her own ability to perform the “important duty,” whether it was marriage, childbirth, spiritual salvation, or something entirely different, distressed the woman and drained her “enjoyment” of the springs.272 Dwight and Sedgwick spoke from their positions as cultural arbiters and members of an older social elite. They were troubled by the emerging order of Jacksonian America, where the ability to enjoy leisure time and do nothing served as a mark of social status. Too many people now trifled away their time with no purpose, threatening the established elite that insisted upon productive leisure. Instead of building lyceums, museums, or public parks, the newer

members of society established pleasure gardens, horse tracks, and tourist hotels; the contrast between the social purpose of leisure activities, to improve or enjoy, was stark. The expansion of springs clientele beyond a small number of wealthy and influential individuals intensified this conflict.273

The new culture of idleness gained influence during the Jacksonian era, but was very much a contested idea that did not dominate society. Most Americans, insisted Alexis de Tocqueville, "want something productive and substantial in their pleasures; they want to mix actual fruition with their joy."274 Instead of pursuing moral improvement or better health (which was what the mineral springs were supposedly all about), people at the springs seemed to be "almost hurried to death" without actually doing anything.275 At resorts with no "court-house bells to summon the weary attorney to the halls of justice and litigation; no counting house duties or bank notices calling the jaded labourer from his domestic comfort," people still found reason for anxiety. Many hoped that "the mere release from business and care" would provide a relaxed atmosphere at the springs, but early nineteenth-century Americans felt restless with nothing to do.276

Visitors quickly grew "very tired" of springs life, whether in Virginia or New York. They often wondered "how persons can pass more than one or two days here for I never saw such an idle place."277 Indeed, typical visits to

274 Tocqueville, Democracy in America, II: 221.
275 May diary, 8 July 1800, NYSHA.
277 Sarah, Saratoga, to A.A. Lawrence, Boston, 13 July 1841, A.A. Lawrence Papers, MHS.
the Virginia springs lasted about one week.\textsuperscript{278} The Virginia springs were part of a larger tourist circuit in the western part of the state, where travelers hopped from scenic spot to mineral spring and back again. Most diaries and letters, as well as the guidebooks that influenced them, trace a springs circuit that allowed fashionable travelers to stop at several resorts throughout the summer. Saratoga was an even shorter stay for travelers, who followed the Northern Tour across the region.\textsuperscript{279} Brief visits, rather than extended vacations at a single spring, were the norm for antebellum tourists. Many travelers expressed an itch to move on and quickly tired of springs life. They might "want change" or "expect to go by the end of the week."\textsuperscript{280} Jane Caroline North found life at Sweet Springs "very dull here, and a change to a more lively place I shall hail with pleasure, as for \textit{this} chiefly we are peregrinating, it is best to enjoy the 'gift while we may.'"\textsuperscript{281} In either case the traveling bug kept North in the seat of a carriage instead of on the couch of a hotel parlor.

The blessing and curse of the springs was their heterogeneous clientele. As one European visitor noted, at the springs "you see people of every opinion and of every kind. All America is represented here."\textsuperscript{282} Other

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\item \textsuperscript{278} Ledgers from several Virginia springs provide the following statistics: mean length of stay 9.5 days, median stay 7.0 days (see Table III).
\item \textsuperscript{280} Dandridge Spotswood diary, 28 July 1848, p. 26, VHS; William Elliott, Saratoga Springs, to Mrs. Elliott, Beaufort, 11 August 1836, Elliott-Gonzales Papers, SHC.
\item \textsuperscript{281} Jane Caroline North diary, 10 September 1852, Pettigrew Family Papers, SHC.
\item \textsuperscript{282} \textit{A Casual View of America}, 66.
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observers were much less charitable in their descriptions of springs society. Charles Latrobe called Saratoga "a motley crowd of men and women of all degrees;—patricians, plebians, first-rates, second-rates, third-rates: gentlemen whose manners savoured of the good old school, and others whose manners indicated their being copied from some new school, or—no school at all... men with name but little money; others who had money and no names."283 In most people's opinions, Saratoga never equaled its reputation for fashion and high life. Disappointed in the society he found there, Henry McCall wrote, "Heaven help me for coming here for Aristocracy. For such a collection of Swills and Rowdies it has rarely been my chance to lay my eyes upon."284 By 1860 Saratoga's popularity began to diminish its drawing power. So many people of dubious social status visited "that the old select circles are beginning to retire from the scene to more rural and quiet retreats." Even so, people still traveled for several days and spent thousands of dollars "to make the acquaintance of others from their own city... [who], had they stayed at home, they would never have known."285 But without going, they could never make an impression on society beyond their immediate circle. That was both the allure and revulsion of springs society: the ability to mix with people outside one's locality and social class. Visiting the springs marked one as a member of the elusive national elite, a group that defined itself in opposition to those under it. At the springs the national elite could see who they were not.

284 Henry McCall, Jr., Saratoga Springs, to Peter McCall, 13 August 1843, Cadwalader Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
285 Potter, A Hair-Dresser's Experience in High Life, 60, 77-78.
By eleven o’clock each night, life at the springs drew to a close. The band played its last note, the dancers twirled their last turn around the ballroom, the guests snuffed out the candles flickering in their rooms, and at last “sleep seals the drowsy eyes of the tired devotee of pleasure.” When the sun rose the next morning, the springs awakened “again to go through its gay routine, till weariness, the desire to change, or the end of the season, puts a period to the scene.”286 Yet in evaluating springs society, observers noted “a considerable hollowness in much of this gaiety.” Some of the younger guests might find the springs a “paradise of delights,” but many of the older visitors, who had tested the waters of fashionable society before, seemed to be “smiling at grief” instead of enjoying themselves.287 The experience of their years and a few seasons at the springs gave them the ability to see through the rituals of fashionable society and agree with Washington Irving that at the springs, “pleasure has taken an entire new signification, and at present means nothing but STYLE.”288 Just being at the springs and competing with others in displays of style and refinement composed the object of a visit. Where Robert G. Shaw had endeavored to “make an effort to recruit,” he found the same pressures of social status and class anxiety he thought he had left at home.289 Tocqueville was correct in his assertion that Americans preferred those amusements and resorts “that are like business and which do not drive business wholly out of their minds.”290

287 Latrobe, The Rambler in North America, 129.
289 Robert G. Shaw, Saratoga Springs, to Jacob Townsley, Steuben, Maine, 16 August 1838, Shaw Family Papers, MHS.
290 Tocqueville, Democracy in America, II: 221.
Chapter Five:
Love for Sale

Each afternoon following dinner Saratoga’s fashionable guests arrayed their carriages in front of the grand hotels for the daily procession down Broadway and to the nearby Saratoga Lake. The order of this parade reflected the social hierarchy of Saratoga Springs—only the most prestigious visitors could head the line. During the summer of 1846 Madame Jumel, the mistress and later wife of Aaron Burr (who had killed the prominent Federalist Alexander Hamilton in an 1804 duel), and a woman with a stained reputation, often led the procession. But some of Saratoga’s guests resented her efforts “by a magnificent equipage to dazzle” the crowd and disapproved of her relationship with Burr and past associations. Then, on the afternoon of August 26, Jumel set out in her coach and four-horse team, complete with footmen and an outrider, only to discover that she was not alone. Rather than being followed by the most select members of Saratoga society, a carriage with two men “in ragged equipage” as footmen and a figure in the carriage dressed much like Madame Jumel pursued. As was her custom, Jumel had her carriage driven “slowly through Broadway, that the inhabitants might have a proper sense of their own insignificance.” Meanwhile behind her Tom Camel, a well-known African-American from town, “fanned himself with a large fan, and bowing and curtseying to the crowds which had gathered on every side.” Madame Jumel soon discovered the ruse and “threatened, pleaded, and offered bribes” to stop the mockery, but to no avail. The carriages
proceeded all the way to the lake and back with Camel mimicking Jumel's every move.1

Madame Jumel's humiliation highlights some of the key questions regarding gender roles at America's mineral spring resorts. She had stepped outside her prescribed role as a women of humble origins and attempted to assume a position of social prestige. The leaders of Saratoga's society ensured that she would not receive their esteem, either by putting Tom Camel up to his charade or allowing it to transpire and approving of it with their laughter.2 Camel's mockery cut deep not just because he blurred gender boundaries, but also because of his race. As an African-American at the lowest rung on Saratoga's social ladder, his cross-dressing equated Madame Jumel with the basest members of society. By playing the part of Madame Jumel, Camel placed that disreputable woman on the same social level as himself. She was no longer a refined lady, but had been unmasked as a woman of humble origins with a dubious past that included prostitution, a faked deathbed scene that convinced her first husband to wed, and association with a man whom few held in high esteem. All the while, Jumel pretended to be the most refined and high-bred lady.3 By not adhering to the accepted gender and social roles at Saratoga, Jumel exposed herself to ridicule, humiliation,

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1 Accounts of the Jumel affair appear in several local history sources. See Daniel Benedict diary, 26 August 1846, Saratoga Springs City Historian's Office [SSCH]; Cornelius E. Durkee, Reminiscences of Saratoga (Reprinted from the Saratogian, 1927-1928), 144; William L. Stone, Reminiscences of Saratoga and Ballston (New York: R. Worthington, 1880), 218-220. According to the 1850 Census for Saratoga, Tom Camell [sic] was a 55 year old illiterate black laborer. Married to a African-American woman four years his senior, he lived in house with four other black families, all headed by laborers or waiters (see Mary C. Lynn and William Fox, "The 1850 Census of Saratoga Springs: A Numerical Listing" [1991]).

2 The motivations for Camel's demonstration are mixed. Benedict claims that the charade was gotten up by workers disgruntled by their experience on a project at Jumel's property (Benedict diary, 26 August 1846, SSCH) while Stone and Durkee allude that social leaders "determined to administer [Jumel] a lesson (Stone, Reminiscences of Saratoga and Ballston, 219; Durkee, Reminiscences of Saratoga, 144).

and the censure of the society she so desperately wanted to join and dominate. Her mistake was not using the allure of sex to advance her social standing, for most at Saratoga did so, but acting so brazenly. The reason society singled out Madame Jumel for such reprobation was that she threatened the stability of gender relations at the springs by pulling back the curtain of gentility that protected the interactions between men and women.4

During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Saratoga and the Virginia springs served the purpose of an elite national marriage market, a place where members of America’s upper classes could gather to evaluate each other and negotiate the prospects of matrimony between their sons and daughters. There congregated “maiden in search of husbands, widows disconsolate, young men inclined to matrimony. ...All have an object in view... and drinking the waters is with most of them quite secondary.”5 For these “hosts of cheerful pretty faces of the softer sex, and hordes of young aspirants to their good graces,” the only barrier between them and a poor match were manners, class boundaries, and “a very partial sprinkling of responsible matrons, and irresponsible old gentlemen, to keep them in order.”6 This was an ambiguous social setting, where status, gender roles, and reputation were at stake. It was a place where people came to both “marry + un-marry if they can.”7 People came not just to scout potential spouses, but

5 “Saratoga Springs,” New York Mirror, Saturday, 3 August 1839.
7 Elkanah Watson, Journal E: Mixed Medley, 19 September 1805, p. 64, Folder 3, Box 2, Elkanah Watson Papers, New York State Library and Archives [NYSLA].
also to socialize, flirt, or possibly even engage in an extra-marital affair. The normal rules of behavior, civic virtue, and interaction between the sexes were temporarily relaxed, which created a dangerous social situation. Making choices about potential spouses, evaluating one another's place in society, and deciding on a course of action and level of intimacy posed difficult problems for springs visitors. Most people reacted to this situation with the language and logic of the marketplace—where everything from respectability to desirability was negotiable and for sale. Northern and Southern springs resembled, in the opinion of one visitor, "a good exhibition room, or (if you choose) a market house."  

The comparison of the springs to a marketplace was not unique to the United States. Seventeenth and eighteenth century English spas like Bath, Tunbridge Wells, Epsom, and Cheltenham served as cultural models for American resorts, especially when it came to gender relations. They developed a reputation as places of sexual adventure where the normal rules of etiquette and propriety were suspended. Men and women negotiated love and marriage in an environment that emphasized what David S. Shields has called "social play." Women used the newly developed social skill of wit to engage men and fend off their advances, perhaps even fending off marriage by demonstrating their conversational aplomb. By flirting with, quoting romantic poetry to, and dangling the possibility of marriage in front of their suitors, women enlarged their socially-accepted sphere of activity without actually surrendering their two most valuable assets, their single status and their virginity. Early English spas developed a reputation as places where sex and manners were intertwined in a manner that both liberated women and

8 Levin Smith Joynes, White Sulphur Springs, to Mother, 21 August 1856, Section 6, Joynes Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society [VHS].
loosened social norms regarding contact between the sexes. And like their American successors, critics of English resorts pointed to the intrusion of market ideology into gender relations. In a passage that later American commentators echoed, the early eighteenth-century Grub Street pamphleteer Ned Ward wrote of Tunbridge Wells: “Maidenheads here bear an extravagant price.”

What Shields describes is a social setting that placed increased emphasis on appearance, manners, cultural sophistication, and performance. The “great project of civility” altered colonial British-American society. In coffeehouses, social clubs, salons, and at tea tables British subjects learned the ways of polite society, a project that extended cosmopolitan manners and values, especially those of commerce, beyond large urban centers like London. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England the city of London served as the metropole and colonial cities like Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Charleston played the part of cultural outposts reaping the rewards of the civilizing influence of polite manners. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century these American outposts boasted a relatively sophisticated society. They in turn exported the culture of civility and extended its influence into the hinterland, especially when members of the national elite gathered at American spas like Saratoga or the Virginia springs. They in turn passed the lessons of politeness on to rural people. At the springs Americans learned the lessons of polite society and began the formation of a culture of gentility in the United States.

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At the "market house" that was the American spas ladies and gentlemen attempted to display their style—or their wares—to their advantage, thus maximizing their own value. Almost every activity and moment offered visitors an opportunity and obligation to exhibit their fashion. Meals, with the "various styles of dress of both ladies and gentlemen," seemed "a good deal like a puppet show" to an 1831 visitor.\textsuperscript{11} Visitors put on a show even as they scarfed down their meals. Likewise, evening balls offered an opportunity "for very brilliant and very lovely women to display their tastes, their jewels, and their fascinations."\textsuperscript{12} Even sitting in the hotel lobby waiting for a cabin or hotel room to be prepared was a moment of display—and one that many guests dreaded, having just exited the stages or trains in a disheveled, dusty state.\textsuperscript{13} Clothing presented an exterior image of who visitors wanted to be and how they wished to be perceived. As such, it assumed an all-important part of the springs experience. A newspaper correspondent reported from Saratoga in 1857 that "it does not 'do', you know, at a fashionable watering-place to allow yourself to appear twice during a season in the same garment."\textsuperscript{14} Instead, women and men in both regions went to great lengths to assemble, don, and display the latest and most ornate fashions.

Simply wearing the latest style was not enough; the point was to distinguish oneself from the crowd. Fierce rivalries developed at the Virginia

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{11} Susanah Isham (Harrison) Blain, White Sulphur Springs, to Mrs. Mary Harrison [mother], Centreville, 24 August 1831, Folder 1, Section 8, Harrison Family Papers, VHS.
\textsuperscript{12} Eliza Potter, \textit{A Hair-Dresser's Experience in High Life} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991 [1859]), 58.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{A Trip to the Virginia Springs, or the Belles and Beaux of 1835. By a Lady} (Lexington, Virginia: R.H. Glass, 1843), 21-22.
\textsuperscript{14} "Life at Saratoga," \textit{Harper's Weekly}, 8 August 1857.
\end{footnotesize}
springs, especially among women. Virginia’s Tuckahoes (tidewater residents) and Cohees (those from west of the Blue Ridge) squinted at and disdained each other because one lady might “give herself airs, and wears such mighty fine clothes, when she goes to the Springs.”15 One evening at White Sulphur Springs, two women “vied with each other in splendour of apparel. ...they promenaded the Parlour long enough for every one to see and admire, and it was amusing to see with what eagerness every one looked on, many rising from their seats to get a good look and some contending the point, as to which was most elegant.”16 Women who engaged in “those petty rivalries” of belledom and who failed to adhere to fashionable conventions might face the opprobrium of “a jury of her fashionable friends” for wearing an incorrect type of lace or outdated pendant.17 The competition was so fierce that women needed to remain on their guard lest their rivals steal their clothing or accoutrements, especially at the bath house.18 Fashionable rivalries reached such an excess at Saratoga that a newspaper termed it “A Novelty.—To see two women pass each other in the street without one or the other turning round to see what the other had on.”19

In this competitive environment women went to extremes to make themselves look beautiful. They “lost not pains in displaying themselves to the best possible advantage” by curling their hair into elaborate designs and adorning it with flowers given to them by suitors.20 During the 1830s the

16 Letter from White Sulphur Springs, to Kate, 10 August 1860, Section 10, Meade Family Papers, VHS.
18 A Trip to the Virginia Springs, 23.
20 James Skelton Gilliam diary, 1816, 7 August 1816, p. 47, Library of Virginia (LoV); C.O. Lyde diary, 6 August 1841, p. 72, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University (Duke).
fashion was to dangle “a long pair of curls on each side of the face, twisted like a corkscrew, and hanging down the cheeks. Some have tied them with a bow of ribbon.”21 These fineries required a significant amount of work and talent. Women in their toilette resembled a general

Disposing, in a bright array,
The potent armor of the day.
Laces, muslins, ribbands, dresses,
Gloves, crinoline and puffs and tresses,
Bijoutrie, odors, pigments, greases,
To suite all humors and caprices;
And many other knicks and knacks
To remedy what beauty lacks.22

One woman was described as wearing “a handsome rich silk, dark, streaming ribbon round her throat fastened by a large red brooch, lace cap, loads of rings, & pink satin bows and streamers in her hair, and to cap this climax were two huge imitation pearl pins.”23 Others wore so much jewelry that it appeared “as if the contents of a jewel box had been scattered over her.”24 Many guests so valued their ornamentation that they locked it up in the hotel safe, only to retrieve it for special occasions.25

Fashion reached its limits with the expanding size of the hoops inside ladies’ dresses. By the 1850s they had grown to such a size that “some of the

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21 Beverly Tucker, Lee’s Springs, to Lucy Ann Tucker, Bowling Green, Virginia, 21 August 1837, Box 47, Papers, February 1837-June 1838, Tucker-Coleman Collection, Manuscripts Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary [SWM].
22 Samuel Sombre [James Watson Gerard], Aquarelles: Or Summer Sketches (New York: Stanford and Delisser, 1858), 8-9
23 Jane Caroline North diary, 7 August 1851, Pettigrew Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill [SHC].
24 Julia Gardiner Tyler, White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, to “Mama” [Juliana McLachean Tyler], 10 August 1845, Folder 10, Box VII, Tyler Family Papers, Group A, SWM.
ladies, in their ambition to outdo the next, make a most extravagant and ludicrous exhibition."26 Known as "bishops," these bustles extended a foot out from the woman's hips and bent "forward with a view to make them still more conspicuous" and present "a serious inconvenience to all who are compelled to pass them."27 The outlandish size of these hoops may have served more than fashion; they "keep the beaux at a respectful distance."28 Even at Saratoga, where Northern domestic reformers' calls for more comfortable and practical clothing presumably reached, merchants profited from the sale of dress hoops and advertised their wares by hanging the hoops from posts and awnings on the sidewalk. Gentlemen embarrassed by the exhibition of ladies' undergarments had no choice "but to shut one's eyes and hasten forward."29 Styles could further shock and offend, as did the prevailing habit of ladies to "expose their arms and busts as well as their faces and hands." The ladies followed fashion in this practice, not the "ordinary ideas of delicacy and decency" of antebellum America.30 Fashions were impractical as well. The waists of some dresses stretched to the bottom of the woman's back, fastened there by a large clasp or buckle. "The style is to walk so as to make that buckle stick out as far as possible. Thus while a lady is as slender as a wasp, she is as prominent as if about to become a mother, in the course of a few weeks."31 Reformers at Saratoga lectured "on the destructiveness of tight

26 Levin Smith Joynes, White Sulphur Springs, 21 August 1856, Section 6, Joynes Family Papers, VHS.
27 Benjamin Temple, White Sulphur Springs, to Lucy L. Temple, Manchester, Virginia, 4 September 1837, Folder 10, Section 61, Harrison Family Papers, VHS.
31 Beverly Tucker, Lee's Springs, to Lucy Ann Tucker, Bowling Green, Virginia, 21 August 1837, Box 47, Papers, February 1837-June 1838, Tucker-Coleman Collection, SWM. The letter continued
lacing," but a lady who heard one such lecture did "not believe it caused one cord to be slackened."32 Both Southern and Northern women ignored the call to simplify their dressing habits.

The insatiable appeal of fashion and competitive display created "a summer rush of silks" at American springs, "a moving to and fro of brocaded matrons and muslined virgins."33 Women both young and old could be seen "displaying and strutting with crinoline and high heel boots to a most alarming extent."34 It often seemed like "the ladies were dressed as if they were attending one of the finest assemblies in the Union."35 This excess of style did not happen every day, but only on special occasions. While the everyday dress at the springs appeared "quite plain, and some hardly neat," grand balls, presidential visits, or the common agreement of the belles might shift daily dressing toward display and ornamentation.36 For these events "dresses, that had long been imprisoned, ...were now brought out."37 The excesses were readily apparent. Dresses used so much material that few women could actually move with ease. Just swinging an arm to the side proved "awkward" and not "graceful."38 One young lady of medium height wore one hundred and twenty five yards of cloth in her dress and "looked like a white cloud made up of fringes... [and] multitudinous wavelets in

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34 Willis R. Williams, Warm Springs, to Suppie, 22 August 1858, Folder 2, 1858-1860, Series 1, Willis R. Williams Papers, SHC.
36 Beverly Tucker, Lee’s Springs, to Lucy Ann Tucker, Bowling Green, Virginia, 21 August 1837, Box 47, Papers, February 1837-June 1838, Tucker-Coleman Collection, SWM.
37 Mark Pencil [Mary M. Hagner], White Sulphur Papers; or, Life at the Springs of Western Virginia (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839), 103.

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which she was enveloped.”39 Less ostentatious souls could only express “the ache to see so much promenading + so much finery.”40 They failed to see the point of the daily fashion show, a sentiment that was shared by some of the fancier dressers. After appearing in the ballroom one preening woman lamented “how nicely I had dressed myself, just to undress again.”41

In general, this level of display was confined to women. According to a men’s clothier in Saratoga, his business was limited because “gentlemen do not care what they wear—anything will do. ...Gentlemen do not talk about one another if their hats are not the most expensive, and their coats are not the newest fashion in the market.”42 The gendered construction of fashion held that women, as objects of beauty and desire, needed to present themselves as favorably as possible, while men, who held a position of power in gender relations and selected from the carefully assembled belles, needed only to appear neat and clean. Indeed, some of Saratoga’s male guests strained convention when they arrived at table “in flannel shirts and dirty shoes, and altogether in a state unfit for ladies’ company.” This only earned them the opprobrium of the women, who refused to dance with the ruffians.43 At the opposite extreme, only “dandies and fops,” neither a respected nor desirable group in springs society, dressed to excess.44 They looked like “the prints in

40 Elizabeth Noel, White Sulphur Springs, to Julia [daughter], 1 September 1860, Lewis Family Papers, 1744-1860, Alderman Library, Special Collections, University of Virginia [UVa].
41 North diary, 2 September 1851, SHC.
tailors' shops and their beauties as trim and graceful as their own bob-tail trotters." 45 These men existed to model their wardrobe and "to display themselves to the best advantage in every suit." 46 They saw little reason to jeopardize their appearance by dancing or walking with a lady lest they "Uncurl a whisker, rumple a cravat,/ Disturb a curl that on fair forehead lies." 47 Few of the ladies, who dressed to impress the gentlemen, wanted to reverse their roles and become the admirers, rather than the admired. Men need only appear respectable and dressed well enough to suggest that they could provide a sufficient level of comfort. Anything more threatened the norms of gendered fashion.

Women's preparation and outlays for fashionable life at the springs were significant. James Kirke Paulding sarcastically recommended an extensive collection of necessary articles for a visit to the springs. His list included six hats, two lace veils, four trunks of clothing, a dressing case, a trunk of hair curls, a dozen pair of shoes, and six dozen pair of hose. He omitted a pocket book, "as papa (or his creditors) pays all, and young ladies ought never to know anything about the value of money." 48 If they did, their wardrobe might not be so large. The problem of overdressing was particularly egregious at Saratoga, but was also as old as the springs themselves. As early as 1800 ladies arrived "with a stock of clothes that will enable them to wear different dresses every day." 49 By the late 1850s some women brought as many as

45 Edmund Randolph, White Sulphur Springs, to Marianne O'Meade, Amelia, 4 August 1840, Edmund Randolph Papers, 1840-1860, VHS.
46 Elizabeth Ruffin diary, 22 August 1827, Harrison-Cocke Family Papers, SHC.
fifteen trunks and one hundred and fifty dresses, enough to change outfits five times a day in one estimation, or even more often if they stayed a week.50 Yet even this plethora of clothing failed to meet some fashionables’ needs. “There are cases of not unfrequent occurrence, when fifteen or twenty ‘Saratoga trunks’... are barely sufficient to contain a lady’s panoply of war.”51 The reason lay not in the contents of their trunks, but those of their competitors. Many women came to the springs intent on “look[ing] better than Miss So-and-So,” but after seeing their rivals’ outfits “were so dissatisfied with their clothing that they had a full wardrobe made up to suit the times.”52

Such extravagance cost a pretty penny, which distinguished the truly desirable (i.e. wealthy) from the rest of springs society. One husband whose income barely topped two thousand dollars per year was hard pressed to keep his wife in style:

Her morning dress cost twenty dollars; her embroidered skirt without which it cannot be worn, was fifteen or twenty, and the alces to match as many more. She has some eight or ten evening dresses, each of which cost from fifteen to twenty dollars; the embroideries to match are, at the lowest, two or three hundred. Her husband allows her twenty-five pairs of gloves and twenty-five pairs of gaiters a year, but these, she says, do not begin to last her. She would not be seen in a hat that costs less than ten or fifteen dollars, and she requires six in the course of a year.

52 Potter, A Hair-Dresser’s Experience in High Life, 90.
At this rate the spendthrift spouse consumed about one fourth of her husband’s annual income. But he could never keep up or get ahead: “All these dresses will be out of fashion next year, and she will need a whole new set to be decent.” Husbands and fathers faced enormous pressure, some of which may have come from their own desire to display their own accomplishments via their wives and daughters, to furnish a suitably fashionable wardrobe. According to Washington Irving, wives plundered shops and starved their families “to enable herself to make the Springs campaign in style.” The costs of making a fashionable mark at the springs were so high that “the lady of a southern planter will lay out the whole annual produce of a rice plantation in silver and gold muslins, lace veils, and new liveries, carry a of hogshead of tobacco on her head, and trail a bale of sea-island cotton at her heels—while a lady of Boston or Salem will wrap herself up in the net proceeds of a cargo of whale oil, and tie on her hat with a quintal of codfish.” Irving, in his usual sarcastic tone, seems to be exaggerating the problem, but his hyperbole points to the uneasiness many men, and especially those from the social elite like Irving, felt toward women not only spent their husbands’ money but also did so in such an ostentatious manner. To do so contradicted the ideology of republican motherhood and simplicity that dominated the period of Irving’s essay. Yet he was not alone in his observations, as commentators from the 1820s to 1850s echoed his sentiments from both springs regions. One female creature of conspicuous consumption at the Virginia springs was “said to have 19 trunks, and 75 dresses, though it is whispered that her father is not worth a dime, being

bankrupt. Is it any wonder?" 55 Such extravagance seemed to another commentator at Saratoga like "a waste of... money!" 56 But even critics like Irving’s friend James Kirke Paulding admitted the social power of clothes. They were social markers, “the intensifiers—making vulgarity more vulgar; aristocracy more aristocratic.” 57

Ladies who spent this kind of money existed at Northern and Southern springs from their earliest days and increased over the course of the early nineteenth century, but they never represented the only model of womanhood. More restrained, sober women often presented an admirable image that the ideology of republican motherhood encouraged women to emulate. The presence of these two feminine ideals speaks not only to the persistence and weakness of republicanism, but also to the continual tension between the competition for status and traditional morality at the springs. As the social structure of early national and antebellum America changed, so too did gender roles, which led many social conservatives to criticize life at the springs. While colonial women had enjoyed a prominent role in public life, often participating in formal state events like balls and dinners, the ideology and practice of republicanism in the early republic attempted to relegate women to the role of observers. Women were considered symbols and repositories of gentility in colonial America, but republican society abolished this role as it adopted a gender-based conception of citizenship that precluded women from taking a public role in official proceedings like parades or court days. The concept of separate spheres relegated women to the domestic front,

55 Levin Smith Joynes, White Sulphur Springs, 21 August 1856, Section 6, Joynes Family Papers, VHS.
57 Paulding, The New Mirror, 304.
where their role in public life took the gender-appropriate shape of benevolent and reform associations. Republican ideology held woman up as the embodiment of virtue. The loving partnership between husband and wife was the ideal for political relationships, the perfect balance between vice and virtue. A woman’s main task was to cultivate the home as a refuge from the strife of the public sphere and to raise her children to be virtuous citizens.

But what these traditional historiographical interpretations of gender in the early republic discount is the power of politeness and the continued influence of the culture of civility in American life. Republicanism never replaced the metropolitan culture of civility that spread from England to America during the eighteenth century, and it offered no alternative to the negotiation of marriage in the marketplace. During the early republican period and throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, gender was still a contested category in American life, and the battle over its definition among elite women was waged within the logic of the prevailing force of the nineteenth century, the market, and its currency, politeness.

One of the earliest and most eloquent accounts of life at the springs, the journal of Abigail May, a twenty-four year old woman who visited Ballston Spa, New York during the summer of 1800, illustrates the competition and negotiation between men and women over appropriate gender roles. Throughout her diary May evaluates men and women based upon two key markers of character in her time, sentiment and refinement. May described Mrs. Western, an older woman she met at Ballston, as possessing “an

60 Shields, Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America, 308-319.
indefinable charm... her manners are the most elegant, her air the most
graceful, her conversation the most clear and refined her every look the most
intelligent and prepossessing of any person I ever knew.” Likewise, May
singled out Mr. French for praise because of his “exquisite sensibility” and
“delicate mind.” May valued ladies and gentlemen who were “gentle and
contrite” and could pass an evening in “interesting & rational Discourse.”
She rejected those like Mr. Baldwin who “must hope for success, more from
the powder on the outside of his head, than the Sentiment within.” Among
all the people May met and commented on, none equaled the young
Catherine Maria Sedgwick: “She has a highly cultivated mind and a feeling
heart. ...she is not so lovely but her mind—her mind, in the words of Lord
Littleton ‘to more than merely sense she joins the softening influences of
female tenderness.’”

May’s ideal men and women possessed the qualities of sensibility,
humility, affection, and refinement that skirted the edges of republican virtue
as identified by historians of the early American republic. They were closer
to the characteristics of the civil society transferred from England to America
in the colonial period. These ideals are not specific to Abigail May in 1800
Ballston, but represent the values of a larger American spa culture. During
the 1830s ladies at Virginia’s White Sulphur Springs held gentlemen “in high
estimation” for their “politeness.” Even in the 1840s people continued to

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61 May diary, 7-8, 16 June, 10, 14 August 1800, NYSHA.
62 For a sampling of the extensive literature on this topic, see Barbara Welter, “The Cult of
True Womanhood, 1820-1860,” in her Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the
Nineteenth Century (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 41; Nancy Cott, The Bonds of
Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University
Press, 1977); Linda Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary
America (New York: Norton, 1986); Lewis, “The Republican Wife.”
63 Shields, Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America, 308-319, passim.
64 Saint George Tucker, White Sulphur Springs, to Mrs. Judith H. Coalter, Spotsylvania,
Virginia, 21 July 1833, Folder 30, Brown, Coalter, Tucker Papers (I) Group A, SWM.
value more than superficial appearance, preferring women like “Miss S—from lowland Virginia,” who “does not strike you at first as being handsome, though the deathless intelligence, and sensibility, which illuminate her face, after a few hours’ acquaintance, compensates for the want of regularity of features.” Elite culture preferred women who appeared “perfectly unconscious of her beauty—so diffident and soft!” Ladies like a mother and daughter from the Carolinas struck observers with their “truly elegant and polished manners; they are perfect specimens of what ladies should be—gentle and winning to all—charming the old and the young. Both intellectual, and highly accomplished, these gentle Carolinians seemed to please universally; for though their manners bespoke ladies, *usage-de-monde*, yet their hearts were seemingly untouched by the spirit of worldliness, that damper to all true nobleness of mind.” More than the creation of republicanism, the ideals of civility continued to exert an influence on American attitudes and manners well after the colonial period.

The ideals of republican virtue and simplicity retreated before the advance of gentility and refinement in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. As evidence from mineral springs resorts shows, middle-class manners and worries about social hypocrisy emerged a full half-century before the Jacksonian era. This finding challenges Karen Haltunen’s description of middle-class society, but the tensions she dates to the 1830s existed at the springs well before they entered polite parlors. The early republic’s social arbiters criticized the new standards as manners that emphasized “the outside show of elegance and ease,” attributes that were

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65 *A Trip to the Virginia Springs*, 31.
66 *A Trip to the Virginia Springs*, 45.
67 *A Trip to the Virginia Springs*, 30.
often "the result of study and of art." Gentility and refinement were easily manipulated standards that failed to separate the worthy from pretenders, as had been the case in the romanticized past of ordered society. The new manners were liberating in that they conferred status based on accomplishments, not family connections or wealth. But by not defining objective standards of social status, they simultaneously created new social ills. In response to the social mobility and masquerading that came with these new standards and threatened their position, traditional members of the elite like Clement Clark Moore declared that "real worth alone can reach the heart." 69 Echoing his sentiments, the Saratoga Whig wrote in 1841: "Gentility is neither birth, wealth, manner, nor fashion,—but in mind. A high sense of honor—or a determination never to take a mean advantage of another—an adherence to truth, delicacy, and politeness towards those men with whom we have dealings—are the essential characteristics of a gentleman." 70 Manners served not to gloss over a person’s rough edges, but reflected true feelings and "harmonize with nature and character." 71 When applied to affairs of the heart and the personal and family reputations at stake, definitions of gentility bore a great deal of significance.

The insistence by social conservatives on the importance of true feeling and inner worth, rather than simply outer appearances, was in part a longing for a romanticized golden age when a stable elite knew each other and maintained social order. Writers like Mary Windle, an 1850s columnist at the Virginia springs, reported on gentlemen of "refined simplicity" in manners

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69 Moore, “A Trip to Saratoga,” 21, N-YHS.
and "genuine kindness," and women with "a total absence of selfishness, and a consideration for the feeling and happiness of all around her." But despite her efforts to idealize the present, Windle was compelled to admit that true gentlemen and ladies were part "of a school now nearly extinct."72 These vanishing men and women rejected the "empty vanities" of antebellum springs society in favor of "things more true to nature."73 But they discovered that the "manners, costumes, +c. of many of the fashionables, quite overpower[ed]" them.74 In 1853 some commentators expressed "surprise at the departure from the primitive and modest style of our mothers of the last century. We are now a fast people; and who can condemn a young belle or an undomestic married flirt for embracing everything in the ballroom that can show her to the best advantage."75 Critics lamented the passing of an idealized past, but it was one that never really existed at the springs. The ideals and manners of the past century—the ways of the colonial gentry, Washington's court, and the waning Federalist elite—never held sway at the springs, where a competitive social reality predominated. As early as 1816, when James Kirke Paulding described sentimental ladies and blue stockings at the springs, fashionable modes of behavior governed society.76 Lamentations of the waning golden age owed as much to the threat to the established social order

73 Letter from White Sulphur Springs to Kate, 10 August 1860, Section 10, Meade Family Papers, VHS.
74 E.W., Saratoga Springs, to Mrs. Bulloch, Savannah, 9 August 1839, Bulloch Family Papers, SHC.
76 Paulding, Letters from the South, II: 227-228.
from below as to the veracity of past societies. The old elite was simply
attempting to solidify its cultural hegemony by invoking a more perfect past it
purported to equal, while faced with challenges from a less refined pretenders
to social leadership.77

As purveyors of this strain of cultural declension, critics like Paulding
and Mary Windle belonged to a new group of social commentators in
American culture. They wrote about travelers, resorts, and the social setting
of the emerging leisure class. The act of writing created a new literary genre,
the travel narrative, but also had larger cultural implications. Some of these
authors, like James Kirke Paulding and Washington Irving, started their
literary careers by dabbling in travel writing before moving on to weightier
and ultimately more successful endeavors. Their successors in the next
generation of American authors, George William Curtis and Charles Astor
Bristed, also experimented in travel writing and social commentary as part of
their larger literary endeavors. But others from the North and South,
including the illustrator and author David Hunter Strother (Mark Pencil),
female columnists such as Windle and the anonymous Netta, and Nathaniel
Parker Willis, made a living by writing accounts of the fashionable life led by
tourists. Willis is a particularly important figure, and his writings played an
significant role in the formation of a leisure culture. Basically, he was the first
professional writer to deal almost exclusively with leisure pursuits. He
described a style of life that was available to all through social mobility and
commercial endeavor. But Willis, a noted social climber, discovered that the
leisure he described lacked the substance of hard work and striving that made
him, as well as antebellum American society, a success. His writing displayed

77 For a discussion of this process in English society, see Raymond Williams, The Country and

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the social tension and unease that other, more aristocratic authors found in springs society. When Irving or Bristed (the maternal grandson of the phenomenally wealthy John Jacob Astor II) railed against the incursion of the middle class into fashionable society, they were not just turning a phrase; they spoke as social authorities attacking the forces that created their own success and threatened the exclusivity of their social position.

Despite the attacks of elite social critics, the new class of "fast people" wasted little time on the imagined sentimentality of their grandparents. The gentlemen at Northern and Southern springs resembled "dandies, smothered in the envelope of cravats, sparkling with jewels, weighed with cables and rigged with ropes... a species of whiskered gentry, whose strength, like Sampson's, lay in their hair." Whenever possible they "sauntered about, their hands in their pockets staring around them, with the most vainglorious air imaginable." Rather than cultivating sensibility or engaging in rational conversation with the ladies, this new breed of gentleman never went "to bed until after midnight, and rises at nine to breakfast at ten. He always is looking for a bath, and has apparently washed away every trace of any kind of character whatever." His reputation and image depended not on character, but on "a fondly cared for mustache" and "hair of pomatum smoothness." But dandyism went only so far and excluded sentimental poets. One scribe gained acceptance only because the "business men" at the springs judged the poet "rational on matters of business, and they forgave his thirst for the

79 A Trip to the Virginia Springs, 37.
80 North diary, 30 August 1852, SHC; John Pendleton Kennedy, White Sulphur Springs, to "Dear," 26 July 1851, John Pendleton Kennedy Papers, West Virginia University [WVU].
waters of Helicon the more easily, as he is the poet of the ladies.”  
Rather than cultivating those who wrote flowery poetry, the new standard of gentlemanly accomplishments in both North and South prized those “able to whiff a segar, use an eye glass, and say ‘demmit’ with a grace.”

The ladies were not much better. Their social graces emphasized the ability to “thump a piano, yawn over a novel, and turn up the nose at anything approaching to usefulness.” Few followed the advice of conventional society and cultivated the qualities of republican mothers, preferring instead to perfect fashionable attributes like witty repartee and the latest hairstyles. Springs visitors would have had to strain to overhear conversations regarding “domestic details,” which were regarded as “the greatest possible bore to a mere fashionable casual drawing-room acquaintance.” Banter that pleased gentlemen and made the ladies look and sound younger dominated the hotel parlors. Despite the yearnings of critics for a return to a simpler time, women displayed the same type of social “wit” that David Shields discovered in his study of colonial British America, and especially at English spas. Like their English predecessors, American women placed so much emphasis on surface accomplishments and appearance that even their eating habits came under scrutiny. Early in the century “the interdict against female eating” eased, but by the 1850s women were again encouraged to consume as little food as possible. Fashion took note of those who filled their plate too many times. In many cases “peony-colored cheeks”

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81 Windle, Life at the White Sulphur Springs, 46.
82 Saratoga Whig, 28 September 1841, p. 1.
83 Saratoga Whig, 28 September 1841, p. 1.
84 Bristed, The Upper Ten Thousand, 160; Shields, Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America.
created "an insuperable objections to admission to any refined society." 85 Fashion cared little about a woman’s internal worth. Preferable were those women like Mrs. LaVerre of New York, "the belle of the United States Hotel [in Saratoga]. It is said that she speaks five different languages; and that she can converse with thirty gentlemen at once on varied subjects in different languages." 86 Others took the quest for fashionable notoriety to extremes. While her husband sat inside the hotel in very bad health, one New York City woman "promenade[d] the piazza fashionably dressed, with the ladies and gentlemen, sometimes her arm resting on one of the latter." 87 This type of woman was not simply a product of mid-nineteenth century cultural declension; she had existed amid the fashionable display at the springs for decades.

in one of the earliest reports on springs Abigail May described the paragon of the fashionable lady, Mrs. Amory of Boston: she is

a little twisted and is proud... her riding dress shew her shape to every possible advantage, and every posture that could increase what (I suppose) she considered as Beauty was made use of.

Nothing was quite good enough to go down her delicate throat at dinner, and it was with difficulty she could walk across the room, hanging on her husband. Added to all this, a supercilious and contemptuous dropping of the eye when any one passed, effectually disgusted our social party. 88

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85 Paulding, New Mirror, 283; Porte Crayon [David Hunter Strother], Virginia Illustrated: Containing A Visit to the Virginia Canaan, and the Adventures of Porte Crayon and His Cousins (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), 129.
86 Robert McCoskry Graham diary, 28 July 1848, p. 88, N-YHS.
88 May diary, 2 July 1800, NYSHA.
May’s “disgust” came not solely from Mrs. Amory’s behavior, but also from Amory’s ability to pull it off while sentimental ladies like herself sat to the side of the parlor, restrained by the tenets of republican simplicity from participating in such displays. Decades later Mrs. Amory’s qualities were so ubiquitous and admired that they evolved from the subject of envy to that of satire. At White Sulphur Springs in 1838 Mr. Stuart noticed the rich and “upstartish” Boggs girls parading around the ballroom. When he overheard their mother singing their praises, Stuart decided, “in conjunction with some ladies,” to have some fun. Placing themselves near enough to Mrs. Boggs that she could hear their every word, the conspirators “began with the most extravagant exclamations of rapture” about Miss Boggs’ dancing. “‘Look,’ I cried, ‘What inimitable grace!’ &c &c until at length my transports surpassed the power of expression & I could only by gestures & countenance evince the wonder & admiration. All this while the old lady was sidling up nearer & nearer, so as not to lose a word, her countenance sparkling with delight, & the other ladies who were in the secret, almost convulsed with laughter!”

Stuart and his accomplices exposed the main problem of springs society: many people tried too hard to achieve status—their “efforts were too perceptible to succeed.” When social climbers like the Boggs family made blatant efforts to advance their position, the established social order ensured that they were put back in their place with mockery. The goal was not to ridicule others, but rather to ensure that only the most socially acceptable people gained entry to the bourse to negotiate marriage. Arbiters at the springs claimed to be able to spot a social fraud from afar. A gentleman might

89 S., White Sulphur Springs, to Wife, 26 July 1838, Section 3, Transcripts, Stuart Family Papers, VHS. For countless examples of fashionable ladies and gentlemen, see Windle, Life at Washington, 170-173, 178-185, 192-195, 362-367; and Life at the White Sulphur Springs, 48-79; Paulding, The New Mirror, 228-247, 254-259, 272-277.
90 Potter, A Hair-Dresser’s Experience in High Life, 62.
appear to be refined and polite, but more often than not was “too much given to making pretty speeches.” Those “full of pretension and folly” failed to impress most ladies.91 In one case Abigail May described Oliver Kain as “tall finely shap’d good eyes, and teeth—a very handsome man—what would you have more, alas! what a pity it is so fine a casket should be empty, or filled with trifles, as if nature clap’d on the cover and forgot to put in the brains.”92 Such gentlemen possessed the “charm of manner” so valued by springs society, but little else. Their refinement “is easily worn with its seamy side inward and fairest gloss outward.”93 They might, like “Capt. Fitzhugh of the navy, a gentleman of high polish and easy manners,” meet all the requirements of refined, fashionable society, “except that he uses his fingers to his nose, instead of a handkerchief, and eructates rather too freely.”94

Ladies tended to control their dyspepsia better than gentlemen, but still lacked polish in the eyes of many observers. Their main fault was emotional shallowness and a lack of intellectual depth. As one Virginia gentleman noted, “With the Belles every thing is ‘charming + sweet, or horrid.’ ...The other day I overheard a conversation of which the following is a sample. ‘What a most charming, sweet breeze,’ Yes Miss, a most splendid + nice air.”95 Another woman, Miss Dulles of Philadelphia, seemed “a good specimen of a foolish, talkative girl, without discretion, or one interesting quality.” Fashionable ladies like Miss Dulles spent too much time on their appearance, and not enough on other refinements like intelligence, good

91 North diary, 1 September, 16 August 1851, SHC.
92 May diary, 12 August 1800, NYSHA.
95 G.M., Berkeley Springs, to Lucy T., 9 September 1828, Box 1, Folder 1820-1829, Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke.
conversational skills, and true feeling. Approached by a “fantastically dressed woman,” Jane Caroline North noted that the woman “was inclined to be very sociable, but her distracted toilette discouraged any such feeling on my part.”96 Those who reached the pinnacle of appearance, like the celebrated “Waterford Beauty,” fell short in other areas, being in this case “quite illiterate + uneducated.”97

Too many ladies and gentlemen at the springs imitated style and civility well enough to earn “a reputation rather beyond her merit.”98 Despite their surface appearances and “pretty talent for small talk,” the springs produced people who “purchased some of [their] most captivating qualities with [their] Barouch and pair.”99 Foreign visitors noted that Americans had “a deficiency of taste and feeling” that marked them as inferior to their European colleagues. They lacked the intensity of love, enthusiasm for art, music and literature, intelligence, sentiment, and subdued manners that James Silk Buckingham admired in his English countrymen and women.100 The problem, according to one American, lay in the emphasis on external accomplishments among Americans. Good looks and a gloss of manners admitted “all sorts of people” to fashionable society. Men and women with newfound wealth circulated in the highest levels of springs society, but they lacked the “moral tone” that signified true status. Rather than improving one’s moral condition, wealth and social station “too frequently exercise a deteriorating influence upon the character.” As the novelist T.S. Arthur

96 North diary, 7 and 11 August 1851, SHC.
97 Gilliam diary, 29 July 1816, LoV.
98 North diary, 31 August 1852, SHC.
99 Mary Murray, “Journal kept on a Jaunt to Ballston + Saratoga,” 6 August 1825, N-YHS.
noted, "the consequence is, that they who are rich, are not always the ones whom we should most desire to mingle with."\textsuperscript{101}

But at Northern and Southern springs one could not always be so selective. Thrown together in a heterogeneous, competitive society, men and women attempted to decode the external signifiers of each other's character. Courtship was not a process of romantic love, but a complex negotiation of the semiotics of flirtation. Every glance, every movement, every word, every article of clothing, every unuttered thought—all expressed coded messages in the language of love. Deciphering these messages tested the acumen, patience, and insightfulness of men and women at the springs. In a sense, the main task of springs life was to characterize and categorize the potential suitors one met.

People were constantly on display at the springs, trying to send and receive the semaphore of courtship. Whether dancing, eating, riding, sitting in the parlor, drinking at the spring, or walking the lawns and sidewalks, men and women watched and interacted with each other. This is not to say that they did not enjoy segregated activities—many times springs society separated by gender. Fancy work in the parlor, games like shuffleboard, hunting parties, some picnics and rides, and especially bathing were restricted to one sex. At the end of the season the fashionable beaux left the springs, "leaving the ladies in a state of most enviable independence."\textsuperscript{102} But people spent the majority of their time in mixed company.

\textsuperscript{101} T.S. Arthur, "Going to the Springs; or, Vulgar People," in \textit{Heart-Histories and Life-Pictures} (New York, 1853), 158, 162.


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Men and women met in the parlors and on the porches of the springs. A typical afternoon in the drawing room featured “a variety of amusements—Mr. Kain spouted poetry and sung. Mr. Cochran read aloud. Mr. Dupaster flattered. Mr. Rogers played back gammon and talked sentiment. Dr. Erving cut Miss Clarkes knotting. The ladies, knotted, netted, made tassels, fringe, cut watch papers—knit purses, wove watch chains, braided hair.” This was a seemingly innocuous scene, but who could foresee the results of Mr. Dupaster’s flattery or Dr. Erving’s attention to Miss Clarkes’ knotting? The potential for flirtation and perhaps more existed. Games that both sexes enjoyed, like billiards, provided yet another opportunity for mixing. Abigail May believed she and other ladies “appear’d to great advantage” when they played the “graceful game.” It allowed them to show “a fine form and hand and arm to the greatest advantage. Rising upon the Toes, the hand rais’d eyes fix’d and the exercise giving a fine glow to the cheeks, our Ladies really look’d quite killing.” Gentlemen often admired the skill of the ladies with “a delightful sparkle” in their eyes. Bowling at the ten-pin alley was also popular with women (and men) because it “afforded them an opportunity of showing off a handsome arm, and sometimes a neat ankle.” One afternoon at the Rockbridge Alum Springs several gentlemen bowled with their jackets off and neglected to put them back on once several ladies arrived. Scandalized, one woman wondered “what business men have wearing sleeves to their skirts—pardon the name—I should have said nether garments,” in front of ladies. Whether plantation mistresses or Northern ladies, nabob planters or urban merchants, few early-nineteenth century

103 May diary, 18 August 1800, NYSHA.
104 May diary, 5 and 20 August 1800, NYSHA.
105 Bristed, The Upper Ten Thousand, 117.
106 Lexington Gazette, 20 August 1846, p. 2.
Americans normally enjoyed such carefree, even intimate, interaction with the opposite sex on a daily basis.\textsuperscript{107} And when given the chance, they took advantage of the opportunity. After dinner most of Saratoga’s guests headed to the piazzas. The covered porch was “so commodious as to admit of eight hundred or a thousand promenaders at once.” Sometimes the gentlemen retired to the smoking gallery that fronted the porch, where they could gaze upon “the fair votaries of fashion,” whom the men “commented on to their heart’s content.”\textsuperscript{108} The piazzas were a public space where people presumed the right to approach and talk to one another. One lawyer even went so far as to “impertinently” enter the piazza of one woman’s small hotel “and throwing open the shutters insisted upon my playing or walking with him.” With no choice but to comply, she visited for a few minutes before others saved her from the revelry. The woman later expressed her dismay at the men who “are forever in our Piazza, for my part, I do not like this encroaching upon our precincts—this upper piazza ought to be sacred to the Ladies.”\textsuperscript{109} But her protests were to no avail. Most guests used the hotel piazzas as meeting places; they might be considered the trading floors of the marriage market. Ladies often sat there in groups “in the most attractive negligee costumes, and with an \textit{abandon} perfectly bewitching, with all the world to gaze at them... as utterly indifferent and unconscious as they would be in their own parlors.” Men mingled about while those passing on the street looked on. One woman insisted that she could knit away “and never drop a stitch for the hour

\textsuperscript{107} Charlene Lewis includes a detailed discussion of the social mixing between men and women at the Virginia springs in Chapter 7, “Women and Men Together” of her “Ladies and Gentlemen on Display,” 481-554.

\textsuperscript{108} Potter, \textit{A Hair-Dresser’s Experience in High Life}, 54.

\textsuperscript{109} May diary, 7 June, 23 July 1800, NYSHA. Karen Haltunen describes the need for “back spaces” away from the performance of everyday life in \textit{Confidence Men and Painted Women}, 102-112.
together, nor once look up, though I hear the creaking of boots at my side.” She might blush at this moment or when she felt “some gentleman is gazing at me, and I cannot help myself from giving a sly glance at his feet, to see if they are handsome.”

Furtive exchanges on the porch were only the beginning of flirtation at the springs. According to the popular author George William Curtis, “Romance is the necessary association of watering-places, because they are the haunts of youth and beauty seeking pleasure.” The young and old, wealthy and merely well-off, and beautiful and ugly mixed at the springs hoping to find a spouse or at least a temporary romance. Ballrooms and parlors served as “a sort of meeting ground” where young men and women “learn the ways of the world.” To ensure the propriety of the exchanges between the sexes, social leaders at White Sulphur Springs created “The Billing, Wooing and Cooing Society” during the 1830s. Its leader posted rules designed for “the encouragement and promotion of marriage” on a long scroll of pink paper in the hotel ballroom. Any of the 1,700 gentlemen, or the female objects of their affection, who signed the articles of flirtation could check its regulations whenever they doubted their conduct, which “had a very beneficial effect on many young men.”

Even so, the atmosphere at the springs was less than refined. Folly seemed to overwhelm the carefully designed regulations and pretensions of refinement. The culture of flirtation emphasized surface accomplishments, polite conversation, and endless flattery instead of true feeling and beauty. As

111 Curtis, Lotus-Eating, 105.
112 John Rossen, White Sulphur Springs, to Sister, Camden, South Carolina, 12 August 1849, Greenbrier Archives [GBA].
113 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 138-139.
a result, "the most distinguished flirts at all the houses are as ugly as the devil."114 Few people offered more than pleasantries; proper manners were a rarity. "The men," wrote one member of that sex to a female friend, "scarcely wear that deferential air, which is due from our sex to yours. They do not draw the line between familiarity + vulgarity."115 The young women assembled at the springs deserved "a better fate than they are likely to find among the throng of male associates who surround them."116

The gentlemen suitors offered little. They ranged the gamut of desirability from pure dandies who resembled "young roosters strutting about, with their standing collars, making love to the ladies," to those with a greater degree of polish.117 Jane Caroline North called Mr. Coles "the most romantic, Byronic, sentimental personage" and hoped to become "acquainted... much more!"118 Coles presented an image completely the opposite of another gentleman "who has relapsed into his old bachelor habits." Having withdrawn from the marriage market, "he smokes his Havana and wears his Panama (hard-hearted creature) with an air of conscious victory."119 But even this specimen was not nearly as obsequious as the fictional Beau Brummel, whose "sole ambition seems to be to make himself agreeable to ladies." Brummel achieved popularity because he demanded neither romance nor the prospect of matrimony. When women needed an escort or a gentleman who "is not a candidate for matrimony, yet so kind that he is ready to offer himself, in order to give ladies the delectable

115 J. Lynah, Saratoga, to Mrs. Francis M. Lewis, Philadelphia, 28 March 1857, Box IV, Folder 11, Conway Whittle Family Papers, SWM.
117 Potter, A Hair-Dresser's Experience in High Life, 80.
118 North diary, 17 August 1851, SHC.
119 Windle, Life at the White Sulphur Springs, 61.
privilege of once refusing an offer," Brummel was their man. "Ubiquity
seems to be one of his endowments—it is impossible to find a place where he
is not, at least, where he will not soon come. He is perfectly impregnable to
insult; no lady accepts his company when she can find any other, but if he is
scorned one day he is just as ready to subject himself to the same indignity the
next—anything for the sake of basking an hour in a lady’s smile—though he
knows she despises him."120 Other than Brummel, the only improvement
could come in the form of a gentleman of great wealth. Such a man found
that “brilliant belles claim his acquaintance with nods and becks and
wreathing smiles.”121 He was the ideal of most ladies.

Among the ladies “the greatest desideratum” was to be considered a belle
with “charming beaux to wait on them.”122 Quite often so few women
attended the springs that “but for being so intolerably ugly, most could
become belles.”123 A majority of visitors, however, especially the men,
expounded on the beauties of the ladies. One observer “never saw so large a
proportion of handsome women in any assemblage.” He claimed that for
“any young gentleman on the look-out for a fashionable beauty, whether to
flirt with or to make love to, I cannot imagine a more charming field for
selection.”124 Charles Griffin called a school mistress he saw at Saratoga, not a
profession noted for beauty in the early republic, “a real smasher.” Her eyes
“shot an arrow... every time she looked towards me. But fortunate for me
they didn’t make my heart bleed. Her hair and eyes were black as charcoal and

121 Windle, Life at the White Sulphur Springs, 48.
122 J.K.L., Red Sweet Springs, to Charles, 5 September 1854, Section 12, Carrington Family
Papers, VHS.
123 Benjamin Temple, White Sulphur Springs, to wife, Fredericksburg, 18 September 1851,
Folder 10, Section 61, Harrison Family Papers, VHS.
124 Levin Smith Joynes, White Sulphur Springs, 21 August 1856, Section 6, Joynes Family
Papers, VHS.
glistened so you could see your face in them. Her cheeks were plump, fresh and fair, and her manners very easy." His infatuation continued throughout the evening prayer meeting, where he "couldn't tell" why the woman continually snuck glances at him.\(^{125}\) That this exchange took place during a supposedly somber religious service speaks to the pervasiveness of flirtation at the springs. Young men and women seemed to obsess on the opposite sex and the prospect of romance. One traveler became so enthralled with a woman that he kept his roommate “awake half the night descanting on her beauties, her dark eyes, rich brown hair, coral lips, alabaster neck & taper waist.”\(^{126}\)

Simply seeing women drink from the spring enraptured men. When the women arrived at the fountain, which habit dictated they do several times each day, gentlemen wasted no time in remarking “on the beauty of some fair drinker.” At the fountain gentlemen seized the “opportunity of dipping themselves into the good opinion of the ladies; and it is truly delectable to see with what grace and adroitness they perform this ingratiating feat.” Mark Pencil overheard one bystander remark as he watched one “surpassingly beautiful” woman:

“She drinks—she drinks; behold the matchless dame;

To her ‘tis water—but to us ‘tis flame.”\(^{127}\)

The water itself became a sexual stand-in for many men. One poet grew “envious” of “the liquid she sips/ Between her pulpy, swelling, ruby lips.” If men could not enjoy the pleasure of physical contact with women, they could

\(^{125}\) Charles Griffin, “A Trip to Saratoga in 1833,” 16 May 1833, mss. diary, History, 1830-1839 folder, Saratoga Room, Saratoga Springs Public Library [SSPL].

\(^{126}\) Alexander A.H. Stuart, White Sulphur Springs, to Fanny, 25 July 1847, Section 3, Stuart Family Papers, VHS.

\(^{127}\) Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 142-143; Irving, “Style at Ballston,” 259.
at least experience it vicariously. But the scene at the fountain was also a chance to glance

Her little feet and nice turned ankles shew,
Peeping from muslin petticoat below.128

In addition to physical appearance, men admired women of means. Two sisters who possessed a million dollars between them attracted a crowd of suitors despite their "quite plain" looks. "But the magic of wealth dissipated every feature of uncomeliness, and they were accordingly sought after and courted very probably by those whose only aim was their fortune."129 These and other desirable women attracted "a multitude of little insects, in the shape of beaus, buzzing about" them.130 One charming belle at White Sulphur Springs "inspires new life into the circles around her; and you may trace her presence by the livelier movements and more mirthful laugh that follows her like the bubbling wave of a ship."131 In this wake occurred the flirtation and courtship that filled the sails of springs society.

Romance seemed so pervasive that one commentator wrote, "Cupid is fluttering his wings in the transparent atmosphere."132 On the gravel walks of the Virginia springs one could see belles and beaux "flirting, loudly laughing, sweetly talking."133 Women walked too and fro "under a shot of curious eyes" as the gentlemen surrounded them at every step.134 Eager gentlemen

129 Stephen Allen Memoirs, typed transcript, 16 August 1841, p. 186, N-YHS.
130 George Evelyn Harrison, Sweet Springs, to Mrs. Ann H. Byrd, Winchester, 11 September 1828, Folder 2, Section 11, Byrd Family Papers, VHS.
131 Windle, Life at the White Sulphur Springs, 48.
132 Windle, Life at the White Sulphur Springs, 46.
133 A Trip to the Virginia Springs, 18.
134 Laura Wirt, White Sulphur Springs, to Caroline Wirt, Washington, 22 August 1826, William Wirt Papers, MdHS.
“spoil[ed] their cravats in their nervous efforts to tie them exquisitely.”135 Few couples seemed to be making matches, “although for a lover each girl throws a net.”136 Ladies donned new dresses each day “in order to attract admirers.” They then encouraged each of their suitors by accepting small gifts and kind words until one stood out as the favorite. Gentlemen gave ladies “their handkerchiefs, their gloves, even their slippers; it binds [the ladies] to nothing.”137 In short, almost every aspect of springs life related to romance.

The usual pattern of courtship required interest, investigation, and introduction. For example, several ladies were smitten with Elizabeth Ruffin’s brother during Saratoga’s 1827 season. They initially assumed that the two were married because of the brother’s “very attentive” behavior. One lady asked Ruffin directly if the gentleman was her husband, not “for her own gratification,” but because “she had been frequently asked without being able to give satisfaction.” Once word of the non-marriage circulated a group of women “most formally came forward for me to corroborate the report, great was their surprise when rightly informed and occasioned no little diversion among all hands.” Almost instantly Ruffin’s brother “excite[d] a great deal of curiosity among them.”138 The ability to meet this newly available gentleman offered an opportunity few ladies neglected. They, like Abigail May years earlier in Ballston Spa, considered the introduction of new gentlemen at the springs, an event “of consequence to set my Cap square.”139

135 Windle, Life at the White Sulphur Springs, 46.
138 Ruffin diary, 15 August 1827, as quoted in O’Brien, An Evening When Alone, 84-85.
139 May diary, 22 June 1800, NYSHA.
Introductions provided an opening to begin the courting process. But in an effort to regulate the “great summer-lottery of contact and acquaintance,” Nathaniel Parker Willis’ Committee of Management limited introductions at Saratoga to men and women of legitimate and equal social rank. That way, the daughters of wealthy planters would not have to worry about flirting with the sons middle-class lawyers and clerks or, even worse, canal workers.140 Similarly, at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia the inimitable Colonel Pope, who many compared to Beau Nash, the social arbiter of Bath, England, presided at the ballroom and ensured proper matches between belles and beaux. He devised a plan later echoed by Willis “for the protection of the dear sweet young ladies from villains, and impostors, who deceive them at the Springs by an appearance of wealth.” In Pope’s system, “no gentleman is suffered to be introduced, unless known to some gentlemen, on a list the Colonel keeps of respectable men from all parts of the country.”141 With many parents either absent or unable to judge the character of suitors from beyond their immediate community and social network, families relied on this system of introductions to ensure appropriate matches and protect their virtue. Apparently most people at the springs followed these rules. Elizabeth Ruffin passed an agreeable afternoon with another young lady, which “led to a formal introduction.” Only after this formality could they become true friends and intimates.142 But the boundaries of cordiality inhibited some people from pressing their affections. One gentleman fell “desperately in love” with a woman, but because of propriety felt awkward declaring his attraction. As his friend noted, “His seat is nearly opposite to her at table so he

140 Nathaniel Parker Willis, “Manners at Watering Places,” in Hurry-Graphs; Or, Sketches of Scenery, Celebrities and Society, Taken From Life (New York: Scribner, 1851), 290-296.
141 A Trip to the Virginia Springs, 28-29; on Nash’s efforts to direct society, see Hembry, The English Spas, 1560-1815, 135-147.
142 Ruffin diary, 11 August 1827, as quoted in O’Brien, An Evening When Alone, 82.
has every facility for falling in love with her, but remember he had not been introduced to her yet."\textsuperscript{143}

Once suitors secured a proper introduction to their mark, a "parade of finery, arranged with all the taste of a graceful Coquetry" began. "Laughterloving" ladies were often attended by gentlemen "bending over them showing their eager attentions and whispering their graceful nonsense; all the time their hearts lifted up by the combined influence of wine, music and love as if they had inhaled a gallon and a quart of Nitrous Oxide."\textsuperscript{144} The pseudonymous poet Samuel Sombre described a scene "within the deep piazza's shade" at a Saratoga hotel wherein a lady and her suitor

\begin{quote}
Enjoys what's called, I believe—flirtation;
In other words,—that is to say,—
She and a man make love, in \textit{play};
Sigh, languish, simper, roll their eyes,
And mumble out inanities.\textsuperscript{145}
\end{quote}

So ubiquitous and integral to springs sc\-iety was this type of flirting that one commentator insisted "that there was no pleasure at a place of this sort without a little flirtation."\textsuperscript{146} Another agreed that his time at the springs "has been spent agreeably, but would not have been so much so had I not carried on a few harmless flirtations."\textsuperscript{147} Men and women in both Virginia and New York often practiced their "arts of fascination" on friends or relatives for whom they felt little romantic love and were therefore a safe subject. These

\textsuperscript{143} Susan Bradford Eppes, White Sulphur Springs, to Pa, 1 August 1847, Folder 1, Susan Bradford Eppes Papers, SHC.
\textsuperscript{144} "Dagger's Springs," Lexington Gazette, 12 August 1836, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{145} Sombre, \textit{Aquarelles}, 40.
\textsuperscript{146} Mary Murray diary, 13 August 1817, N-YHS.
\textsuperscript{147} R.C. Rust, Old Sweet Springs, to C.C. Clay, 14 September 1858, Folder, 1858, Box 3, Letters May 1857-May 1862, Clement Claiborne Clay Papers, Duke.
surrogate suitors served as “a target upon which she shows her skill.” To perfect her romantic skills one lady claimed that “the only want I experience is the company of some gentleman friend.” She sought not a lover or confidant “to wile away the time by the fashionable game of flirtation,” but merely someone to serve as “a companion for my walks.” Men were not a necessity for this woman, “but merely a matter of convenience.”

Flirtation did not always imply romance or the possibility of sex—more often it served as a means of social intercourse, a negotiation between men and women over relationships, status, and intimacy. Intercourse here means not sexual relations, but business. Consider Charles Griffin, who lusted after a young woman he saw sitting in a bathhouse window every day and “hoped she wouldn’t be the one to shower me” because he felt he would “be a bit bashful about it.” When Griffin visited the establishment he confronted his fear. The woman he had fantasized about led him into a dark room and told him to take off his cloak. But as he nervously disrobed, the attendant disappeared and Griffin took his bath without any sexual adventure. Even the breathless Samuel Sombre could only speculate that men and women “Squeeze hands,—perhaps go farther, too—/ Who knows?—I don’t—Pray friend, do you!” Like Sombre we can only guess at the result of these flirtations. Extant sources reveal little evidence of people consummating their courtships, but provide numerous examples of foreplay. Perhaps this is because in the age of the Market Revolution gender relations resembled mercantile exchanges. Men and women bartered their identities and

149 Sallie R. Munford, Healing Springs, to Ellis Munford, 7 September 1860, Folder, July-December 1860, Box 4, Correspondence, 1859-1862, Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke.
150 Griffin, “A Trip to Saratoga,” 16 May 1833, SSPL.
151 Sombre, Aquarelles, 40.
reputations on the open market of romance through the medium of flirtation, with a premium placed on a woman's virginity. Actually engaging in sexual acts lowered the value of the product and injured both parties. A debased woman no longer commanded a high price on the marriage market, and no gentleman would court a woman whom society held in low esteem; if he slept with a woman, the market incentive, securing a valued and protected commodity, was gone. For these reasons, as well as other social and religious considerations, most women and men delayed coitus until after marriage. For them pleasure came not from any sexual act, which may or may not have taken place, but from the negotiation, banter, and exchange of wit surrounding the possibility. Sex itself mattered little; the fun was in the chase. When Mary Murray observed that "G is flirting away at a fast rate with a little Miss W from the South who seems to understand the business as well as he does," she was not making an idle analogy. At the same time that marriages were increasingly based on sentiment and love, concepts of business and market exchange influenced gender relations at the springs.

In the open market of springs society, the buyer controlled the exchange. Usually, women played the role of purchasers of flattery while men offered their merchandise in the form of pleasantries. When Abigail May returned from an excursion up Lake George, which included a night spent camped on an island amid a raging thunderstorm, she "alighted amid a crowd of Beaus, who all flew to welcome me, and congratulate me on my escape from drowning." Here May controlled the supply of her affections while the

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153 Murray diary, 12 August 1817, N-YHS.
155 May diary, 20 July 1800, NYSHA.
“beaus” provided an abundant demand for her attention. But she rebuffed their advances and acted like Miss Gamble, who upon departing the springs “was surrounded by Gentlemen, uniting in a common supplication to her, to have compassion on us; and procrastinate her stay, but our intreaties availed not!” When outnumbered by eager suitors, women set the price for their friendship and controlled the negotiations.

And women were picky about the type of suitor and manner of courtship they preferred. The majority of flirters, whether male or female, preferred to flatter their targets. A British major at Saratoga proved “indispensable to the ladies” because of his “increasing and interminable stock of agreeable nothings.” Complimenting another’s taste, dress, demeanor, or sensibility instantly ingratiated the giver of the compliment into his or her target’s favor. Women constantly pestered one Virginian by soliciting his “assistance in writing letters, a piece of flattery they think my vanity will not allow me to refuse.” So persuasive was their praise that he consented. Flattery proved such a “benign, beguiling, be-everything” force that some considered it able to “smooth the wrinkles of care, and make even old age wear a smile.”

But many targets of this endless adulation caught onto its style and substance. The seemingly continuous “pompous speech” of Mrs. Bennett seemed “highly ridiculous” to Jane Caroline North. Similarly tired of the “thickly buttered compliments” directed toward his person and books, John

158 JKL, Red Sweet Springs, to Charles, 5 September 1854, Section 12, Carrington Family Papers, VHS.
159 May diary, 4 June 1800, NYSHA.
160 North diary, 20 September 1851, SHC.
Pendleton Kennedy “sought an early opportunity to terminate the conference” with a young lady in Virginia, and snuck off to the hotel porch to smoke a cigar. But none better classified the “profusion of fine speeches which actually infect the atmosphere we breathe” than Saratoga’s Abigail May, who fumed: “buz, buz, our ears are assailed on every side with compliments... ’tis the Ladies, must be flattered—’tis the part of the gentleman to administer the soothing essence.” May attributed these idle pleasantries to the British advice writer Lord Chesterfield, who “says, you may safely flatter a Woman from her understanding down to the exquisite taste of her fan, no flattery is either too high or too low for them.” In May’s opinion too many men resembled the “Jessamys” in Royall Tyler’s 1787 play, The Contrast. A confirmed philanderer and dandy, Jessamy at one point terms another character a “Vulgar, horrid brute! Married, and above a hundred miles from his wife, and thinks that an objection to his making love to every woman her meets! He never can have read, no, he never can have been in a room with a volume of the divine Chesterfield.” Determined to parry the thrusts of such admirers, May believed that she could “makc some of our Jessamys acknowledge all women are not so weak as to swallow the dose however applyed.”

But when flattery failed, suitors possessed an arsenal of additional approaches to courtship. Cultivating the image of the feeble female was a

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161 Kennedy diary, 23 July 1851, WVU.
162 May diary, 20 August 1800, NYSHA. Philip Dormer Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield was the recognized authority on the necessary social accomplishments of gentlemen. His Letters to His Son and Principles of Politeness, anthologies of missives to his illegitimate son instructing him on the best ways to become a respected gentleman (and seduce women), were published posthumously in the late-eighteenth century and recommend the steps any young man should take to gain respectability.
164 May diary, 12 August 1800, NYSHA.
favorite technique among women in both springs regions. On an excursion through the Virginia mountains, a broad stream blocked a picnic party’s route. “Miss J—being somewhat timid, Mr.— gallantly caught her up in his arms, and bore her across, amid the bravos of the gentlemen, and the approving smiles of the ladies.” Each acted his or her part exquisitely: Miss J as the frail lady and her gentlemen as the gallant savior. Less romantic individuals relied on their conversational skills as an inroad to familiarity. Mr. Morgan enchanted Abigail May with “some delightful observation upon the ‘Heavens above and the Earth beneath’, he spoke in so soft a voice, and look’d so much more than he said.” Some of May’s other suitors, like Mr. French, employed less subtle methods of expressing their interest. He accompanied May on a walk to a nearby bridge, where he “produced paper and pencil [did he intend the phallic significance?]—urging my taking a view so beautiful, it was vain to refuse.” It takes little imagination to deduce that French wanted more than a quaint drawing. But his awkward attempts paled in comparison to those of Mr. K, who “had exhausted his stock of ideas upon the ladies” and decided to pursue May. While strolling with her, Mr. K sprung his trap: “so taking hold of my arm he began quoting from Thompsons seasons with much theatric gesture and killing glances. We walked on and got to the centre of a bridge when he stop’d and began ‘but happy they the happiest of their kind’ he held me fast and went thro the passage with great correctness and emphatic display of feeling.” Mr. K likely hoped that May would respond favorably to the poem, especially when he reached the conclusion, “the love that has been evoked in the loveliness of nature.” Perhaps May would be overcome by emotion and fall into his

165 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 105.
166 May diary, 11 July 1800, NYSHA.
167 May diary, 7 June 1800, NYSHA.
arms. May understood his intentions immediately and thwarted the plan. Looking at their companions, May “saw the girls and Erving laughing immoderately and could have join’d them nay for that matter I did.”

Men like Mr. K were not the only ones who attempted to woo members of the opposite sex. Many ladies walked the public spaces of the springs with “their gaudy plumage proud” swinging “before th’ admiring crowd.” Indeed, many a belle

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Poses herself, with studied grace,} \\
\text{Just in a spot—(she knows the place)—} \\
\text{And there, seductive, lies in wait,} \\
\text{Where men are wont to congregate.}
\end{align*}
\]

Such women employed all of their charms to hook “the fattest trout.” They lay in wait as “a gay deceiver... an easy prize, a tempting bait.” Women’s attempts to snare gentlemen were not always so devious. One young woman projected an air “of unconsciousness and indifference” in her everyday manner, often sitting on the hotel piazza in a state of melancholy. But when a favored admirer approached, “she wakes up with so much vivacity and joyousness that it is a great compliment to the person so received.” Gentlemen were more likely to “gallantize the ladies” based upon their “invincible good humor and unfailing vivacity,” a technique that frequently worked. Once they had established themselves as suitors, gentlemen relied on their physical appearance. They hoped that upon seeing and speaking to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[168] May diary, 17 August 1800, NYSHA. This passage is the opening line (1113) of the final section of “Spring.” (James Thomson, The Seasons and the Castle of Indolence, James Sambrook, ed., [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984 (1726-1730)], 33.)
\item[169] May diary, 17 August 1800, NYSHA.
\item[170] Sombre, Aquarelles, 22-23, 38.
\item[172] Paulding, Letters From the South, II: 242.
\end{footnotes}
the ideal gentleman, women would remark as one did: “My bosom beats quick and my eyes start with tears.”173 Suitors could hope for no better response to their advances.

Even so, people’s best attempts at courtship frequently fell short. Men and women rejected the advances of their admirers just as effectively as suitors made them. When a gentleman visited her cabin “discussing very fluently + as he thinks very smartly,” Laura Wirt simply picked up a book and then her pen and paper while others indulged the “great Bore.” While the “false fire” of the conversation flashed around her Wirt wrote, “Heavens! man, hold your tongue. I cannot understand what I am writing.”174 Many women lacked Wirt’s ability to confront undesirable suitors, preferring instead to rely on more subtle expressions of indifference and confide their true thoughts to their diaries or letters. Despite her best efforts to do “every thing to avoid it,” Jane Caroline North could not prevent Mr. Riall from proposing to her. In her journal she noted that her procrastination in halting Riall’s “annoying behaviour... was only prolonging my own discomfort.”175 Other women relied on their projected self-image to fend off suitors. Abigail May discovered that “the persecuting attention of Mr. Bowers quite vexed me—I thought myself secure from all, even civilities from him, as I had heard he ‘detested ugly women’ and thought a woman who pretended to sense and sentiment, the greatest bore in creation—as I make pretensions to all three—I placed my security there.”176 In an attempt to rid herself of his attentions, May apparently called Bowers “a sot and a deceiver,” which not

174 Laura Wirt, Warm Springs, to Catherine Wirt, Washington, 9 August 1826, William Wirt Papers, MdHS.
175 North diary, 15 September 1851, SHC.
176 May diary, 20 July 1800, NYSHA.
surprisingly angered Bowers. He attempted to apologize to May for his behavior, but fell short in his sincerity. May responded by saying, “Mr. Bowers the next time you feel disposed to shew you within this way I hope you will be treated as you deserve—with silent contempt.”177 Yet even this blunt threat did not deter the intrepid Bowers from pursuing May. Several weeks later he again pressed his case, and May once again responded coolly: “I will tell you Mr. Bowers, there are some gentlemen whom the less we know of them the better. You happen to be one of that description.”178

The problem with men like Bowers, and springs society in general, lay in the over-reliance on “empty courtesies.”179 Too many gentlemen moved beyond “the appearance of being well-dressed” and neglected “that deferential air, which is due” ladies. They acted too casually and crudely around the ladies.180 In general these gentlemen sought not romance but social advancement. When they heard that two wealthy heiresses had arrived at White Sulphur Springs, the suitors lay “active siege to these fair El Dorados.” Left with few options, the ladies, “to get rid of their tormentors, have caused to be circulated that they possess only a tumble-down plantation, mortgaged over the rafters and roof, on the borders of a rice swamp.”181 Some targets of flirtation were less subtle in their rejection of their admirers. Confronted with a particularly obsequious young lady, the married John Pendleton Kennedy “took the opportunity when she turned her head to a lady on the other side of

177 May diary, 22 July 1800, NYSHA.
178 May diary, 15 August 1800, NYSHA.
179 “My Dear Anne,” from White Sulphur Springs, 1 September 1836, GBA.
180 J. Lynah, Saratoga, to Mrs. Francis M. Lewis, Philadelphia, 28 March 1857, Folder 11, Box IV, Conway Whittle Family Papers, SWM.
181 Windle, Life at Washington, 168.
her... to elope which I did in a manner that must have led her to think that I had fallen off the bench out of the door.”

Flirting was not confined to the young. “Old Maids” enjoyed the revelry as “the bloom of antiquated virginity.” These “old Jezebels” often “dressed like tragedy queens, made themselves the centers of groups whilst the bald + grey headed penniless old bubbles fly hover around the young ladies.”

Many “old bachelors... lost their hearts” at the springs not to older women but to pretty young maids. Even John Sylva Meehan, the Librarian of Congress and “a queer looking old man with a yellow wig,” fell in love. He was seen “squiring” a young lady about Fauquier White Sulphur Springs in 1837 “with a grotesque gallantry which is quite amusing.” The transparent efforts of older suitors failed to succeed. The “broken down belles” rang hollow: their “efforts to convince the world that they are not cracked, are truly ridiculous and absurd.” They were “incapable of ringing any other peals than those which would be the death knells of matrimonial peace and happiness.” Only foolish youths who knew no better answered their toll. Too many of the old maids resembled Mrs. Rush of Philadelphia: “she is a large coarse women rouged beyond all semblance to nature, & wears her dress so very décolleté as to be disgusting... Her bust under the thin black covering looks very like an

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182 John Pendleton Kennedy, White Sulphur Springs, to wife, 24 July 1851, Kennedy Papers, WVU.
183 Ruffin diary, 14 August 1827, as quoted in O’Brien, An Evening When Alone, 84.
184 Emmie, Saratoga Springs, to Sister, 28 July 1859, Elliott-Gonzales Papers, SHC.
185 Six Weeks in Fauquier, Being the Substance of a Series of Familiar Letters, Illustrating the Scenery, Localities, Medicinal Virtues, and General Characteristics of the White Sulphur Springs, at Warrenton, Fauquier County, Virginia; Written in 1838, to a gentleman in New England; By a Visitor (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839), 33.
186 Beverly Tucker, Lee’s Springs, to Luce Tucker, Jonesborough, Missouri, 7 Aug 1839, Box 48, Papers, July 1838-January 1840, Tucker-Coleman Collection, SWM.
India rubber pillow when half filled with air.”\textsuperscript{188} Such “spinsters” were “past the power of enchantment.”\textsuperscript{189}

But older women and widows made a significant mark on springs society. At White Sulphur Springs in 1812 two widows were said to “rule here with divided sway.”\textsuperscript{190} Indeed, many of these “charming,” bereaved women were thought to “stand among the most attractive of their sex.” Gentlemen surrounded them “with daily tributes of worship and praise.”\textsuperscript{191} When not being pursued by gentlemen, some widows joined the hunt themselves. Young ones strove exceptionally vigorously to re-enter the state of matrimony. They often sat “buzzing like bees... maturing their plans for future conquest.”\textsuperscript{192} Some old gentleman widowers sent their grown-up daughters away for the season “that they might not stand in the way of a second engagement.”\textsuperscript{193} Even a difference of thirty years raised few eyebrows: “that is nothing in our day; it is quite the fashion. ...What if this gentleman has a few false teeth, and a well-combed wig; they become him. He is a man of fortune and talents, and the young lady will have agreeable companions in his youngest daughters.” One widower of a scant three months asked his male cohorts to “pray tell me who that interesting-looking woman is...? Her manner seems extremely winning. Mark that fascinating smile. How beautifully white her teeth are! Her lips are like two ripe cherries. And what a bust! Ah! there is indeed a woman!”\textsuperscript{194} So much for honoring his deceased

\textsuperscript{188} North diary, 27 August 1852, SHC.
\textsuperscript{189} Ruffin diary, 14 August 1827, as quoted in O’Brien, \textit{An Evening When Alone}, 84.
\textsuperscript{190} Peyton Randolph, Sulphur Springs, to Maria, 6 August 1812, Peyton Randolph Papers, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library.
\textsuperscript{191} Windle, \textit{Life at Washington}, 189.
\textsuperscript{192} Windle, \textit{Life at the White Sulphur Springs}, 61.
\textsuperscript{193} Paulding, \textit{Letters From the South}, II: 233.
\textsuperscript{194} William Burke, \textit{The Virginia Mineral Springs, with Remarks on their Use, the Diseases to Which They are Applicable, and in Which They are Contra-Indicated, Accompanied by a Map

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wife's memory. Once they had finished grieving (presumably for a longer
time and in a more sober style than above), widows and widowers possessed
an advantage over their younger, single, and inexperienced rivals. They knew
the benefits of marriage, whether romantic, sexual, financial, or social, and
understood the steps required to secure a new spouse. Faced with competition
from widows like the woman who "both gives and takes flattery like a
woman of fifty campaigns," the naive belles faced a difficult path to
marriage.195

To add to the young ladies' predicament, the atmosphere at American
springs had "a most singular effect, that of passing off old married ones for
single."196 In both Virginia and New York gentlemen at dances exhibited "a
decided preference in favor of Married ladies, as they were all chosen, while
the poor single ones were left as disconsolate wall flowers."197 Quite often
husbands and wives took separate vacations, with interesting results. Louisa
Collins felt obliged to tell her friend Mercie Harrison "of the prodigious
flirtation" initiated with her by their mutual acquaintance at the White
Sulphur Springs, Hill Carter, "in the absence of his beloved spouse, who is
passing her récréation d'été most innocently in Alexandria." Taken aback by
Carter's temerity, Collins declared his actions "most shocking, and worthy of
Penance."198 Some women did not share Collins' acute sense of propriety.
One "beautiful and newly-married lady, with an old rich husband" carried on
an affair at Saratoga. Each weekend her husband visited her at the springs, but

195 John Pendleton Kennedy, White Sulphur Springs, to wife, 26 July 1851, John Pendleton
Papers, WVU. For an excellent study of courtship, see Rothman, Hands and Hearts.
196 Ruffin diary, 18 August 1827, as quoted in O'Brien, An Evening When Alone, 86.
198 Louisa M. Collins, White Sulphur Springs, to Mercie Harrison, Pagebrook, Virginia, 21
September 1837, Folder 1, Section 6, Byrd Family Papers, VHS.
when his business called him away each Monday, "her weekly consolation in the shape of a favorite lover" arrived on the train. According to one wag, "It was curious to see the sober dress and quiet habits of the lady while the poor old husband was by; and the transition to gayety was just as curious when the husband was gone and the lover came." But the cuckolded old man never discovered the deception.199

Although many married women had "jealously-devoted husbands" who never left their sides, many more enjoyed spouses who kept "at a discreet distance, and only show themselves from business at proper times, about the end of the week, when virtue assumes to take the lead."200 Fashion permitted an even more brazen breach of marriage conventions. One married woman threw a dinner party for "her lover and a few female friends with their lovers" at the springs when their husbands were away, although the husband footed the bill.201 Many of these same ladies would "deign not to speak to their husbands in public, but are hanging eternally on the arm of some gentleman whom they court in public and who in our unsophisticated world would pass for their husbands." They had no conception of their "criminality, but act this from a principle of ton [or fashion], which makes it impossible for them to take notice of each other in public!!" The commentator dreaded the future of a nation with such lax morals.202 But perhaps these permissive spouses knew something of springs society. Whatever the level of flirtation people engaged in while away from their husbands or wives, limits existed on the tolerable level of intimacy. Men and

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199 Potter, A Hair-Dresser's Experience in High Life, 63-64.
201 Potter, A Hair-Dresser's Experience in High Life, 67.
202 William Elliott, Saratoga Springs, to Mrs. Wm Elliott, Beaufort, South Carolina, 17 August 1828, Elliott-Gonzales Papers, SHC.
women might walk alone through the woods, talk in hushed tones, dance a
dozen cotillions, laugh away the afternoon, even hold hands or exchange a
kiss, but their diaries and letters reveal little evidence of illicit sexual liaisons
or adulterous trysts at the springs. That type of activity fell outside the bounds
of propriety in refined early-nineteenth century society. The springs offered
people the opportunity to escape the strictures of everyday marital and gender
conventions and relax. But the springs were not a boundless orgy of free love
where normal standards vanished; there were limits to proper behavior,
which forbade open adultery. Some husbands knew they had nothing to fear
by allowing their wives to journey to the springs alone. Edwin Jeffres enjoyed
a chat with the "accomplished and handsome" Mrs. Saunders. He "informed
her that I was a married man with four little daughters. She then informed
me that she had no children. I remarked to her that I did not wonder at Mr.
Saunders bringing her to the Springs & leaving her."203

From this perspective marriage offered few positive attributes. The
springs occupied the odd position of both marriage market and carnival-like
setting, where normal social rules were temporarily suspended to allow for
harmless social play.204 With the example of guiltless pleasure around them,
few people opted for matrimonial bliss. But according to James Kirke
Paulding too many people at the springs, especially bachelors, "don't know
when they are well off, and want to get married. ...For my part, I think a man
who goes to a watering-place to get a wife, deserves to be—married; a folly
which... 'always brings with it its own punishment.'"205 Ever the sarcastic

203 Edwin Bedford Jeffres diary, 11 August 1852, VHS.
204 Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the carnival does not fit the springs precisely, but still offers a
useful perspective. His best writings on the idea include Rabelais and His World, trans. Helene
Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); and Problems of Dostoevsky's Politics,
205 Paulding, Letters from the South, I: 172.
crank, Paulding was not alone in his pessimism. Those who favored marriage saw it not as a romantic paradise but as a cure for social ills. Matrimony, wrote one newspaper critic, was "the surest cure for a passion for the gay circles of New York, Saratoga, and Washington." Once married, this critic hoped, the former belle might temper her enthusiasm for fashionable pursuits.\textsuperscript{206} Life at the springs proved otherwise. But in the end, most women adhered to the "culture of resignation" described by Joan Cashin. Conservative authors like Catharine Maria Sedgwick agreed upon "the prime necessity of woman's life, a male adjunct, who appeared as regularly as the knives and forks at meal times."\textsuperscript{207}

Many in the early republic and antebellum period attempted to carve out a niche for themselves as independent, single women. But the cultural pressures to marry and the financial hardship of living single were often too great to overcome. Young, single women often "felt the want of a male friend old enough to think of something better than flirtation and compliments." Surrounded by eager suitors and ambitious mothers, the woman alone "stood in need of something to strengthen her convictions and confirm her resolution against marrying for convenience."\textsuperscript{208} Despite her best efforts to resist her parents' urgings to find a husband, including repeated trips to the Virginia springs in the 1820s, Laura Wirt Randall abandoned her efforts to establish her literary career and married. Her case is indicative of the paucity

\textsuperscript{206} Netta, "First Impressions of Saratoga, No. 7," \textit{National Era} 13, 664 (22 September 1859): 1.
\textsuperscript{208} Beverly Tucker, Lee's Springs, to Lucy Ann Tucker, Jonesborough, Missouri, 1 September 1839, Box 48, Papers, July 1838-January 1840, Tucker-Coleman Collection, SWM.
of single women and prevalence of marriage among American women during her time.\textsuperscript{209}

For most women, as well as men, marriage reduced itself to a quest for financial stability and success. Although historians have identified romantic love and companionate marriage as increasingly popular during the nineteenth century, at the springs financial concerns dominated.\textsuperscript{210} In his \textit{New Mirror for Travelers; and Guide to the Springs}, James Kirke Paulding outlined, in his humorous, sarcastic style, the rules for negotiating springs society. One of its most instructive sections, Chapter IX: "Of Matrimony, and the Best Mode of Insuring Happiness in the State, By a Discreet Choice of a Helpmate," acknowledges the importance of beauty, attention to fashion, vanity, the ability to strike a figure in public, and the dangers of women who are retiring, well read, or have a will of their own. But both the first and last point that Paulding makes is that "money is absolutely essential to the patient endurance of the married state. The choice of a rich husband, or wife, supersedes, therefore, the necessity of all rules, as wealth secures to the successful adventurer all the happiness this world can give, so long as it lasts."\textsuperscript{211} Writing as a defender of his fellow Knickerbockers against the incursions of the new money in New York, Paulding attempted to delegitimize fashionable society by exposing it as the opportunistic marriage market it was. But these were not the rants of a cantankerous snob or an isolated complaint; other accounts of springs life backed Paulding's claims.

\textsuperscript{209} Anya Jabour, "'It Will Never Do For Me To Be Married': The Life of Laura Wirt Randall, 1803-1833," \textit{Journal of the Early Republic} 17 (Summer 1997): 193-236.
\textsuperscript{210} Ellen K. Rothman has written that a new form of courtship developed around the turn of the nineteenth century that emphasized romantic love but still fell within the ideology of republican motherhood. While her discussion of the importance of sentiment seems consistent with courtship at the springs, romance there took a far more calculating form than in Rothman's conception (\textit{Hands and Hearts}, 5-66).
\textsuperscript{211} Paulding, \textit{New Mirror}, 277-281.
Years later in Virginia, the gambler Martin Duralde reported that "many a marriage is made" at the springs, a place where "there never was a lady without riches."\(^{212}\) This atmosphere appealed to men like George McDuffie of Abbeville, South Carolina, who was "determined to follow the footsteps of his patron, John C. Calhoun, in marrying a girl of fortune, that he may have leisure to devote himself to politics." The son of poor Scots immigrants to the Georgia backcountry, McDuffie clerked for members of the Calhoun family and eventually served in what was once a Calhoun Congressional seat. In 1829 he married Rebecca Singleton, the daughter of the wealthy planter and White Sulphur Springs' social arbiter Richard Singleton, and later served as a United States Senator, Governor of South Carolina, and successful lawyer. Through his alliance with several of South Carolina's leading families through a marriage he secured at the springs, McDuffie rose high in the political structure of his adopted state. As an object lesson in the possibilities for social mixing at the springs marriage market, as well as achieving his personal ambitions, he was a great success.\(^{213}\)

So important were financial considerations to marriage that they often overwhelmed any pretensions to romance. The young dandy Hamilton Bell "was not a marrying man, partly because his income, sufficient to provide him with all bachelor luxuries, was not large enough to support a wife handsomely."\(^{214}\) In another case, when the "Belle of the Springs" expressed an interest in John Munford, he demurred: "I am not in the situation which would make it advisable for me to marry. I have not the sine quo non, an establishment. A poor gentleman with all the notions, views + aspirations of

\(^{212}\) Martin Duralde, White Sulphur Springs, to father, 27 July 1846, LoV.


\(^{214}\) Bristed, *The Upper Ten Thousand*, 111.
a real gentleman, is certainly a miserable, poor devil. I think I will put in practice my resolution to decline all matrimonial prospects for the future, until by diligent attention to the duties of my profession I shall be enabled to buy me a quiet, simple, good, easy young creature who may find some amusement in assisting me in and out of bed, and in applying strengthening plasters to the small of my back.”²¹⁵ Munford was caught between his desire to marry and his disappointing inability to provide for his hypothetical spouse until he reached old age. For him, as for many nineteenth-century Americans from both the North and South who attended the springs, marriage was a cold, calculated decision.

Market values of self-fashioning, negotiation, exchange, and money above virtue suffused springs society. Munford expressed Southern sentiments on market-based marriages, while the author Charles Astor Bristed described a man at Saratoga who married to increase his income. The fictional Mr. Master’s refused to assert “that the match is an uncongenial one,—they have many tastes alike; but I do mean to say that love had nothing to do with it.”

The English narrator retorted, “‘Well, I used to think that in your unsophisticated republican country, people married out of pure love; but now it looks as if the fashionables, at least, marry for money about as often as we do.’”

“‘They don’t marry for anything else,’ replied Masters.”²¹⁶ As a leading figure in New York society, Bristed objected to those who sought to marry into the higher social orders. By criticizing the marriage market and its values, he defended his class against social climbers who would marry into it.

²¹⁵ John D. Munford, Fauquier Springs, to George W. Munford, Woodville, Virginia, 14 September 1838, Folder 1837-1838, Box 2, Munford-Ellis Family Papers, Duke.
²¹⁶ Bristed, The Upper Ten Thousand, 119.
Bristed’s use of an English gentleman, the paragon of high society and refined manners in elite antebellum culture, as the astute observer of Saratoga society further emphasizes his disapproval of the new social reality where commoners dared to court the children of the aristocracy.

Other observers shared Bristed’s disapproval and considered the springs a place where people conceived of marriage as “a business to be transacted.” Lovers spoke not of sentiment, literature, beauty and nature, but “of railway shares and securities.”217 One commentator heard “eternal narratives of courtships and marriages, on the principle of speculation.”218 The springs were no romantic getaway where couples wooed each other with their declarations of affections, but one of the “great marts” of marriage where “rich bachelors and prosperous traders, who have plenty of money—or what is just the same thing—plenty of credit,” negotiated their mergers.219 That was Paulding’s analysis of the Virginia springs in 1816; a decade later he reduced marriage at Saratoga to a simple formula: “If you have money you cannot be otherwise than happy.”220 Like Bristed, Paulding abhorred the social conventions of nineteenth-century America.

Despite the efforts of the literary elite to disparage springs society, a highly efficient system for negotiating marriages developed. Most prominent in this marketplace were the mothers of eligible daughters. Hoping to ensure the happiness and financial security of their daughters, mothers served as a type of marriage broker at the springs. Their purported purpose was “to shield [their daughters] from danger.”221 Usually that meant standing “on alert to see

221 Allen diary, 16 August 1841, p. 186, N-YHS.
that they don’t fall in love with any body not well-established in business, or well to do in the world.”

Mothers made a spectacle of themselves at balls, always watching and “making all sorts of inquiries about the opposite sex; they come here to the ball, not to enjoy themselves but to look after their darling offspring.” For these matron-brokers, “money is everything.” Many took the quest for distinction and advancement to extremes. To one observer the gallery of mothers surveying their daughters “resemble[s] climbing plants, who throw out their tendrils, and in their blindness are unable to distinguish a pillar of state from a decaying, worm-eaten post.” Such parents lived “in a ferment of finesse for their children’s advancement, passing their days in devising schemes of hymenial speculation.”

Speculation involved investigation, negotiation, risk, and sometimes reward. Young ladies displayed their wares, whether sentiment, style, or physical attractiveness, at every opportunity and dreamt “of the conquests they fancy they have made, and which they calculate will be followed up by a matrimonial alliance in the ensuing winter.” They acted like the “Belle of the season” at the springs, “laughing through her bright, blue eyes, and no doubt the little coquette is laughing in her sleeve at some of the silly pretenders to her hand.” To ensure the most illustrious match belles toyed with their suitors,

She keeps the eager wretch at play,

And leads him on, from day to day,

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222 Paulding, The New Mirror, 229.
223 Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, September 1859, History, 1850-1859 folder, SSPL.
225 Windle, Life at Washington, 185.
227 Burke, The Mineral Springs of Virginia, 49.
Men were equally ruthless in their search for a mate. “A long legged lawyer” from Mississippi heard of a belle he thought “might suit him, and so came all the way from Natchez to offer himself.” Arriving at Fauquier White Sulphur Springs only to find that the object of his affection was elsewhere, the lawyer convinced one of her friends to compose a letter outlining his intentions. “He had only a day to spare, and it would save time to apprise her in advance, of his business.” He rushed to his beloved’s house hundreds of miles from the springs, only to have a servant introduce him to his prospective bride as “her father. Down she ran, and met this grave gray headed stranger who handed her [the] letter. The same evening he took his departure.” So much for romance.229

The Mississippi lawyer’s speculation, which included the expense of traveling to Virginia and the blunt investigation of his intended’s feelings, ended poorly. Some would have counted him lucky. Two of the gentlemen in John Pendleton Kennedy’s novel Swallow Barn discussed the “narrow escape” one of them made, having come “within an ace of getting yoked” on a recent trip to the springs. Toll recalled his experience in this way:

“At the Sweet Springs I got acquainted with a preposterously rich old sugar planter from Louisiana. He had his wife and daughter with him, and a whole squad of servants. Forty thousand dollars a year! and the daughter as frenchified as a sunflower: not so particularly young neither, but looking as innocent as if she wa’nt worth one copper. I went in for grace,
and began to show out a few of my ineffable pulchritudes,—and what do you think?—she was most horribly struck. I put her into an ecstasy with one of my pigeon-wings. She wanted to find out my name.'

'Well, what came of it?'

'Thar were only three things,' said Toll, 'in the way. If it had not been for them, I should have been planting sugar this day. First, the old one didn’t take to it very kindly; and then, the mother began to rear a little at me too; but I shouldn’t have considered that of much account, only the daughter herself seemed as much as to insinuate that the thing wouldn’t do.'

'Did you carry it so far as to put the question to her?'

'Not exactly so far as that. No, no, I was not such a fool as to come to the *ore tenus*; I went on the non-committal principle. She as much as signified to a friend of mine, that she didn’t wish to make my acquaintance: and so, I took the hint and was off.'

Toll and Ralph valued independence more than marriage. But what is most striking about this passage is the way Kennedy portrays the two men as ruthless schemers who viewed courtship as a game of negotiation, not true romance. His characters were like the young, inexperienced bachelor who in evaluating his marriage prospects insisted that "the Lady must love him well enough to wait three years, for that he does not mean to turn out in the world without making up for some of his wasted time." Apparently, he wanted more experience, either in life, romance, or business. In general, gentlemen

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were reluctant to marry, "never know[ing] their own minds till somebody helps them into daylight." 232 Ladies did their best to illuminate men's minds and brighten the prospects of marriage. But a gender gap existed between reluctant men and eager women: men gained companionship and a sexual partner, but women achieved financial support and social status, as well as sexual companionship. This disparity grew not only from the different rewards of marriage, but also society's expectations for men and women. A man could remain single and occupy a prominent place in society; an unmarried woman beyond her mid-twenties was generally considered an old maid and a family burden. With so much at stake for women and with such reluctant partners, advisors counseled young ladies to make quick decisions: "if you are asked in marriage, say, 'Yes!' for you may never be asked a second time." 233

The trick was not to marry too early, but to wait for a good match without either picking poorly or being duped by a rogue. Ladies at the springs observed plenty of instances of ill-fated courtships. In a competitive environment like the springs where men and women negotiated alliances, and often obscured their true character in the process, the risk of choosing poorly, and the resulting embarrassment, humiliation, or even worse, abounded. The marriage market at Saratoga, like that described by Paul Langford at Bath, England in an earlier period, required a certain degree of freedom from societal and parental constraints to operate effectively. 234 Along with this increased freedom came the risk of embarrassment,

deception, abandonment, or even pregnancy; rakes, coquettes, and pretenders trolled for easy catches. The liberal social atmosphere at the springs required men and women to trust each other, much like the steamboat travelers in Herman Melville’s *The Confidence Man* did. In both cases, the results could prove disastrous. Women needed only to look at the sentimental fiction they read to see examples of the dangers of romance. American novels like *The Coquette* or *Charlotte Temple* provided frightening case studies of women seduced by duplicitous men, and English novels hinted at similar depredations at the spas. Characters like Jane Austen’s Catherine Morland went to Bath unaware of the dangers posed by “the violence of such noblemen and baronets as delight in forcing young ladies away to some remote farm-house” where they practiced their “mischievousness.” In this dangerous setting women needed to guard against duplicitous suitors who would ruin their virtue.

The threat of seduction was not an idle one, for the art of deception had many practitioners. Ladies sauntered about the hotels of Saratoga in jewelry they borrowed or rented for the season to increase their social status. Elderly gentlemen went to the springs to seek their fortune in a young bride as they teetered on the verge of bankruptcy. James Kirke Paulding witnessed “many instances of this fraud, which would be truly lamentable, did not the woman who sells herself in this manner deserve her fate.” In Paulding’s view status-seeking endangered these young women and stripped them of

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any moral certitude they might have otherwise enjoyed. By yearning for a wealthy, impressive husband, they exposed themselves to gentlemen like the ‘French Count’ at Saratoga who nearly won the hand of a fashionable, wealthy lady from New York City until her family ‘discovered that his ‘headquarters’ was near the main entrance to one our fashionable hotels.’239 At the springs men like Willie P. Magnum, who registered at Saratoga as the son of a Senator from North Carolina, could win the respect of refined gentlemen and be ‘flattered, admired, and courted by all the ladies’ and dance with the finest belle. Only when a steamboat captain entered the ballroom to see Magnum ‘cutting it fat’ on the dance floor was the ship’s steward exposed by his captain. As the news of the masquerade circulated, the steward-Senator’s son ‘saw the captain and disappeared—the mortified Belle took the first stage and is now at home, deeply regretting that she met and admired the Senator’s son!’240 According to Charles Astor Bristed, such young dandies sought not to advance their prospects of marriage but to ‘victimize an innocent débutante, and leave her more or less broken-hearted.’241 That Bristed and Paulding appear yet again as critics of the marriage market should come as no surprise: as authors they recognized a good story, especially when it served to defend their social status and de-legitimize the open marriage market at the springs.

These criticisms and a few disastrous courtships caused some people to overreact. The elite responded to social climbers by moving toward a stifled social atmosphere where ‘many well dressed ladies of the ton [or fashionable set] seem afraid to be social, lest their true position at home be inquired into

239 Viator, “Our Saratoga Correspondence,” Harper’s Weekly, 3 September 1859.
241 Bristed, The Upper Ten Thousand, 111.
and questioned; and many exquisitely-attired men of fashion decline social converse [sic], fearful, doubtless, of the laughter and contempt ignorance must ever provoke." Fear of exposure silenced the social climbers while apprehension about the true character of the individual walking next to them on the piazza reduced the chances members of the elite were willing to take. Writing about the Virginia springs, a poet warned fashionables about "the base, sordid elves" who sought not "virtues and charms," but whose "object is money."

Ye favored of fortune take care of yourselves
Ah! heed not their love tales, though melting as honey.

But such caution eliminated too many possibilities. Hoping to find a suitable spouse for their daughters without being duped, matrons exercised "the severest supervision" over their charges at Saratoga, "for in such a crowd as is at the States [Hotel], though all wear the externals of fashion, it is not to be believed that all who look attractive, and may be so, are persons whom it is desirable... to ever know." Yet despite one aunt’s rule that "'It takes one generation to make a gentleman, and two to make a lady,'" her niece acknowledged that her aunt "wisely makes many exceptions and so many that it can hardly be accepted as a proverb." Caught between the desire to secure a suitable spouse and the dangers of the marriage market, most women at the springs made a cautious purchase and hoped for the best.

But people's overcaution could result in unintended, and undesirable, consequences. One gentleman from Georgia fell in love with Elvira Lane, whom he met at the springs, and followed her home to tidewater Virginia.

243 "Ode to the White Sulphur Springs," mss. poem, 1835, GBA.
244 Netta, "First Impressions of Saratoga, No. 4," National Era 13, 661 (1 September 1859): 1.
He “pressed his suit with so much precipitancy, that, silly as she is, she had sense enough to distrust a flame so easily kindled, and discarded him.” A prudent course of action, but one that kept Lane from “quite a gentleman.” Lane’s acquaintance Beverly Tucker considered her decision “a sad blunder. Her feelings were as quick, I suspect, as the gentleman’s and his precipitancy is perhaps to be accounted for by her encouraging smiles. Still decorum required her to say no, and she said it, he thinks himself trifled with, and will not come to the charge again. Both desperately in Love, as is natural, for she is very pretty, and he a handsome, and a very fine fellow.”\(^{245}\) Lane avoided embarrassment, but in the process missed true love.

Beyond ensuring propriety, just correctly interpreting a suitor’s intentions or a target’s receptiveness proved exasperatingly difficult. Bill Crump and Betty Forbes shared a series of flirtations to the point where “she thought she had him and began to trifle with him, whereupon he told her that she mistook the matter altogether; that he was not at all in love with her, and that he had only meant to be civil.” Crump intended to continue his platonic relationship with Forbes and refused “to put up with any of the slighting airs that ladies practice to make sure of their game.” Even though Crump saw that Forbes “meant to draw him on,” the woman’s sentiment won him over. His efforts to rebuke her advances backfired. She “was so penitent” in her response to his denials of affection that “the poor fellow’s heart was quite softening, and... he soon found out that there was something new and strange the matter with him.” Against his firmest resolutions to the contrary, Crump had fallen in love with Forbes. Unable to negotiate the intricacies of courtship, Crump fell prey to the lady’s charms. Still refusing to

\(^{245}\) Beverly Tucker, Lee’s Springs, to Luce Tucker, Jonesborough Missouri, 7 and 15 August 1839, Box 48, Papers, July 1838-January 1840, Tucker-Coleman Collection, SWM.
admit defeat, Crump swore "he will never go near her again (a resolution she certainly does not mean him to keep, for she likes him)." 246

Women like Forbes exercised the final power in the marriage negotiation—their refusal to agree could ruin the deal. Take, for example, the case of a British visitor to Saratoga, Mr. Ashburton, who professed his love for Mrs. Harrison, who enjoyed flirting with gentlemen in her husband’s absence, and his desire to enjoy her company. Dispassionate, Harrison “did not move a line in her face, or a muscle in her whole figure—not a fibre of her dress even stirred. If she had been a great block of white marble, she could not have shown less feeling.” Knowing the business of courting, she replied that “It was better that he should go no further, as she had already understood quite enough. She was very sorry to give him pain—it was always unpleasant to give pain to any one. She was also very sorry that he had so deceived himself and so misapprehended her character, or misunderstood her conversation. He was very young yet, and had sense enough to get over this very soon.” Harrison flirted, but only to a point. Once spurned Ashburton swore off any more “experiments” on the character of American ladies. His experience with younger, single belles only reinforced his distrust of women. After unsuccessfully courting a number of women, both married and single, Ashburton “had become very skittish of mammas, and still more so of daughters. He regarded the unmarried female as a most dangerous and altogether to-be-avoided animal, and when you offered to introduce him to a young lady, looked about as grateful as if you had invited him to go up in a balloon.” 247

246 Beverly Tucker, Lee’s Springs, to Lucy Ann Tucker, Jonesborough, Missouri, 15 and 25 August 1839, Box 48, Papers, July 1838-January 1840, Tucker-Coleman Collection, SWM.
247 Bristed, The Upper Ten Thousand, 189-190, 201.
Misinterpreting the symbols and signals of courtship posed other perils as well. Ladies who paid too much attention to fashion, rather than relying on more sober standards, might end up with one of "the brainless, mustachioed fools, who in many cases hang around them." If, as a result of their preference for the dandies who dressed well and whispered sweet nothings in their ears, ladies "do not make a wise and happy choice, [they] will only have to blame for it their own lack of discernment." Consider the case of the Ludlow sisters. Overly concerned with fashion and status, they refused to attend Saratoga when they learned that the neighborhood shopkeeper and his family planned to visit as well. When their own fortunes declined as their father's business faltered, they stayed home for the summer rather than suffer the embarrassment of not turning out in style. The family closed their shutters and ordered the servants not to answer the front door lest their rivals learn of the Ludlows' misfortune. When one of the daughters' suitors discovered while conversing with a mutual friend at Saratoga that the Ludlows abandoned their usual journey to the springs because of finances, he rushed back to the city, only to find that no one answered the Ludlows' door. The suitor met the girl's uncle on the street and discussed the situation, finally stating that "If she were such a slave to fashion and observance, she was not the woman for his wife." He quickly returned to Saratoga and successfully courted the girl's friend and rival. For the Ludlows, adhering to fashion cost them their primary objective, a well-established, accomplished, stylish husband for the eldest daughter. But trouble awaited even those who succeeded in snaring a fashionable spouse. Examples abounded of women who married for love without considering the

249 Arthur, Heart Histories, 158-174.
more practical necessities of matrimony, like money and social standing. Older women, once the great belles of the springs, sat “gazing and listening in the midst of scenes exactly like those she passed through so long ago—so long if reckoned by years, so much longer if reckoned by sorrow and suffering.”

The consequences of conforming to fashion were nearly as dangerous as retreating into old maidism.

But women like the Ludlows and gentlemen like Crump fared better than many of their contemporaries at the springs. Losing face or falling short of society’s esteem was horrid enough; but it was nothing like the fate of men and women entrapped by rakes and coquettes. As early as the 1790s, when the springs first began attracting significant number of visitors, danger lurked in the form of duplicitous suitors. At Bath, Virginia, Ferdinand Bayard found “a young man in a sad plight.” Once surrounded by a pretty woman and a host of slaves, he was now alone. “That fair lady, after having squandered [his] money, slaves, horses and carriage, continued on her way toward the north, and wished the young planter a successful crop.” But these coquettes existed beyond the springs. “There are many of those loose women in America, who like migratory birds, visit the various states in the union, at certain times.... They are generally very pretty, rather decent, and do not lack education.”

But even if such individuals preyed on men, women faced greater risks because not only was their reputation and wealth at stake, but also their virtue. The most illustrative example of the dangers women faced comes from the early years of the springs. In the journal of her 1800 trip to Ballston

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Springs, Abigail May reported the tale of the unfortunately named “Miss Kissam,” who was enthralled by “a villian [sic]—by the name of Gillian, [who] has been here about a fortnight. He has paid very particular attention to Miss Kissam—she imprudently walk’d, rode and conversed with him frequently. He (as she says) offered himself to her—and was rejected—he told the gentlemen round, scandalous (I hope) falsehoods about her—and said he could have her whenever he chose, for she loved him to distraction.”

Gillian’s flirtation and proposition were acceptable in springs society, but his bragging about it was not. His eagerness to boast that Miss Kissam did indeed kiss him crossed the line of respectability—he impugned Kissam’s character and virtue, an unforgivable offense. To the distressed damsel’s rescue rode the prominent local politician (and scion of one of New York’s still-powerful patroon families) Rensselaer Schuyler. May’s introduction of this erstwhile savior is instructive: “set a rogue to catch a rogue may we not say the same of a rake?” Schuyler “told Miss Kissam [Gillian] was a needy adventurer and that induced by her little paternal fortune he might perhaps marry her, but that he was a gamester, debauchee, and every thing that was bad—however Gillian still attended her.” Schuyler relied on his power to solve the problem and “sent for an officer and put [Gillian] under arrest for a 1000£ he owed him. And now Miss Kissam heard some plain truths. Tho! saved from one villainous plot, there yet remain’d enough plotters. She was urged to go to New York among her friends.”

At the springs even some of the protectors acted from ignoble motives.

The trick then was to walk a fine line between flirtation and folly; to court and seduce while maintaining the veneer of propriety. Women of the early republic knew the dangers of succumbing to the charms of rakes, having

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252 May diary, 22 July 1800, NYSHA.
read popular sentimental novels like *The Coquette* and *Charlotte Temple*. No fashionable lady at the springs wanted to die giving birth to an illegitimate child, as Charlotte Temple did, or be abandoned at a roadside tavern after being seduced by a smooth gentleman, the fate of Eliza Wharton. As Cathy Davidson has written, these novels provided a testing ground for the possibilities of courtship and romance. By reading these popular texts, women discovered the dangers, rewards, and limits of courtship—valuable knowledge in an age that simultaneously valued status and sentiment. These cautionary tales persisted well into the Jacksonian era and antebellum period. Time-tested stalwarts like *The Coquette* and *Charlotte Temple* continued to be published and read throughout the nineteenth century, and new versions appeared, as in 1841 when the Saratoga *Whig* newspaper printed a familiar story. A chance meeting at the fountain between a wealthy heiress and British officer soon led to flirtation, courtship, and a quick marriage. The happy couple threaded their way south, stopping at romantic spots and spending a few days here and there in secluded cabins. Eventually their conversation shifted from the ambrosia of romance to their future prospects. The Major told his wife that having “made me the happy master of your person, it is time to give me the disposal of your fortune.” But much to the Major’s distress, his wife possessed “nothing in the world but what you see.” He too was without means, having exhausted the proceeds of his gambling exploits on courting the fair lady and hiring their coach. The romance faded instantly. That evening the couple slept in separate chambers, and the Major paid for a seat on the midnight mail stage to New York. But his bride overheard the plot and awakened as the stage arrived, hopped aboard with her baggage, and
rode to the city, "leaving the gallant Major to provide another conveyance, and a new wife at his leisure."\textsuperscript{253}

To prevent any additional indiscretions or falls from grace, springs society relied on the power of condemnation. Social censure sought to insure that scandalous behavior remained rare and a cause of great embarrassment. Decorum frowned upon a gentleman entering a ballroom drunk, breaking engagements to dance with ladies, or insulting gentlemen in the presence of a lady.\textsuperscript{254} But when a "salacious Caledonian" climbed through the window of the "Lodging Room of buxom Kate" at Berkeley Springs in 1775, "urged—he was compell’d, by the irresistible Call of renewed Nature," he met with little sympathy. For at the springs "breaking Houses is breaking the Peace." Once inside he "was unable to make her full," punishment enough for the Scotsman’s indecent behavior.\textsuperscript{255} For Philip Vickers Fithian, simply mentioning the incident provided sufficient censure, so outrageous was the Scot’s conduct. But other actions demanded more specific denunciation. Two fashionable ladies who sought "notoriety" at White Sulphur Springs during the summer of 1837 staged a race on the hotel lawn on which the gentlemen wagered. A number of ladies considered the exhibition "disgraceful" and closed their cabin doors to avoid the spectacle. Louisa Collins recalled that "one gentleman called out for them not to start until he had walked his filly, and after the race was over, the winner of the bet, proclaimed his to be, the best bottomed nag!" Such public discussion of sexuality was rare in polite


\textsuperscript{254} Thomas White, Jr., Jones Springs, to Thomas White, Sr., Petersburg, 23 August 1850, Folder, Correspondence, 1850-1854, Thomas White, Jr. Papers, Duke.

society. The language shocked Collins, who asked a friend, "Did ever you hear the like! For my part, I think the appellation, 'lady', is inappropriate."\textsuperscript{256}

For Louisa Collins discussing the scandalous conduct provided a firm censure of the ladies' behavior and highlighted, by contrast, her own virtue. Most people, especially women, at the springs followed her example. Gossip served as a check on unruly behavior and circulated at a rapid rate at a place where women "Retail, with zest, each trifling news."\textsuperscript{257} From her beauty salon in Saratoga Eliza Potter "often wished I could absent myself from conversations that I know ought to be confidential, and that I had no business to hear." But as a service worker, she "could not tell ladies to shut their mouths, and hence I was much oftener the receptacle of secrets than I desired to be."\textsuperscript{258} Many women saw it as their "imperative duty not only to tell all you know, but all you have heard, not failing to suggest probable circumstances" of love affairs and scandals.\textsuperscript{259} But often women pushed their desire for gossip to harmful levels. According to Abigail May the springs were "a censorious place, and one cannot be too careful how they conduct, whatever we say goes to the other house [where the men stayed], and vice versa. We frequently too are complimented with the credit of speeches we never made." Rumors ruined more than one woman's reputation. Women could not afford to remain silent, but had to strike a balance between prolixity and reticence, for "if a Lady is reserved, she is no company, they 'had as leaves sit by a mile stone' if chatty and social, why 'how dearly she loves the men'—these very words have been used."\textsuperscript{260} If they wanted to, women could

\textsuperscript{256} Louisa M. Collins, White Sulphur Springs, to Mercie Harrison, Pagebrook, Virginia, 21 September 1837, Folder 1, Section 6, Byrd Family Papers, VHS.
\textsuperscript{257} Sombre, \textit{Aquerelles}, 21.
\textsuperscript{258} Potter, \textit{A Hair-Dresser's Experience in High Life}, 68.
\textsuperscript{259} \textit{A Trip to Virginia}, 20-21.
\textsuperscript{260} May diary, 4 August 1800, NYSHA.
destroy each other's reputations. Jealous that one young lady snared a much-desired gentleman as her groom, her rivals engaged the hotel's servants to spy on her. When her male guardian visited early one morning to examine her letters, a servant burst into the room and reported to the proprietor that the gentleman had spent the entire night in the woman's chamber. Her reputation for virtue (and presumably her virginity) ruined, the woman returned home in shame, her prospects for marriage destroyed. Women refused to confront a rival or enemy; instead they "slandered her behind her back, while to her face they were all kindness and love."261 In this manner women dispensed with their fashionable competitors while retaining the veneer of politeness and refinement they so treasured.

They only managed to get away with such behavior because the springs were "the Paradise of pretty women; we do every thing that we please, and nothing can possibly go on without us."262 No matter "what expense the gentlemen may go to change the state and tone of society, it is the ladies who give it its tone after all." Quite simply, in fashionable society "the ladies rule the day."263 Consider the case of Martin Van Buren, who visited Saratoga in 1839 as the sitting eighth President of the United States. After "playing the gallant to the ladies" in the ballroom, he crossed the floor to shake hands with Mrs. DeWitt Clinton, the widow of one of Van Buren's principal rivals in New York State politics. Mrs. Clinton saw the President approaching, "folded her arms, gave him a scornful look, and turned off."264 But this

261 Potter, A Hair-Dresser's Experience in High Life, 75-77.
263 Potter, A Hair-Dresser's Experience in High Life, 60, 62. For a detailed discussion of the leading role women played in Southern society, as well as their part in reinforcing the ruling gentry's authority, see Kiener, "Hospitality, Sociability, and Gender in the Southern Colonies."
behavior strained the limits of social convention a bit too far. Observers of Clinton's tantrum agreed that she had "behaved very ridiculously in refusing to shake hands with the President." Her actions fell outside the parameters of propriety. Philip Hone stated that "Mrs. Clinton's conduct has not been justified by any person whom I have heard speak of it." Even Van Buren's political enemies at the New York Herald "condemned her for it."265

Clinton, like Madame Jumel, violated one of the cardinal rules for women in springs society—she exposed her personal pride and determination to right a past wrong. While Clinton's actions had nothing to do with flirtation, people's responses indicate the fate that awaited women who stepped outside of accepted gendered norms of behavior. Failure to act like an alluring, demure belle led to censure from one's rivals and neglect from the beaux. Open sexual adventure like Madame Jumel's was unacceptable. But even if women behaved properly, they might fall prey to seduction and ruin at the hands of a rake. The hothouse of springs society produced over-ripened gender roles that emphasized physical beauty, pleasing conversation, and an alluring, if deceptive, persona. "This mode of life," wrote James Silk Buckingham, "introduces the young of both sexes much too early into public life." He felt that "the gay season at Saratoga is a very unfavourable preparation for the discharge of those social and domestic duties which all are sooner or later called upon to discharge."266 Flirting and acting as a seductive coquette or polished dandy contributed little towards productive life after the springs, especially if a belle or beau succeeded in attaining his or her goal, a spouse. As one critic wrote, "Youth, health, and

265 Nevins, *The Diary of Philip Hone*, I: 411; E.W., Saratoga Springs, 9 August 1839, to Mrs Bulloch, Savannah, Bulloch Family Papers, SHC.
266 Buckingham, *America, Historical, Statistical, and Descriptive*, II: 441, 452.
beauty” were the holy trinity of the springs. “No old belle ever returns. No girl who was beautiful and famous there, comes as a grandmother to that gay haunt. The ghosts of her blooming days would dance a direful dance around her.” The very values of springs society and the characters they cultivated were worthless beyond the confines of the marriage market. George William Curtis could only wonder if the springs, “where to be a belle was the flower of human felicity... had fulfilled its promise?”

Duped into believing that fashion was their ultimate achievement, women stepped outside their prescribed social roles and missed cultivating the polite accomplishments required of their gender. To elite social critics like Curtis, gender roles at Northern and Southern springs, with their incessant emphasis on style, appearance, and marrying well, only served to undermine proper social order.

At the end of the season young gentlemen who had journeyed to the springs hoping “to dance themselves into the affections of some rich heiress, sit despondingly in the parlor, or retire to the perusal of their bills.” They balanced their accounts based on their conquests or defeats. Loath to depart, the gentlemen sat
gossiping upon the edge of the bed, and were you under it, you would hear how every Tom Thumb, or Prince Riquet with the tuft, was the most chivalric and resistless of King Arthur; what innumerable fair-haired Preciosas were wondering at the same wonderful Arthurs; and how many a Fatima has been rescued, or at least was clearly ready to be rescued, from the stock-jobbing,

mercantile old Blue Beards. Then, gorged with experience, blasé of the world, patronising and enduring life, the royal Arthurs, scorning heaps of broken hearts they leave behind, transfer themselves and their boots to a new realm of conquest at Newport, and reduce the most impregnable heart.²⁶⁹

These traveling salesmen brought their wares to the great marriage market of the springs. Whether they found buyers or not, they moved on to the next town, where they could again negotiate and trade the great commodity of the springs, the prospect of marriage. The Market had reduced gender constructions and an individual’s sexual virtue to yet another item for sale. And at the springs men and women inspected, negotiated with, and purchased the merchandise in a way that the more normative social setting of home may not have allowed. That was the objection of many conservative critics of the system—the marriage market was too open. Members of the elite preferred to keep the bourse closed and only admit individuals of equal social rank. But the reality of American society differed from their ideal. Just as Northern businessmen could not limit competition and Southern tidewater planters could not prevent the creation of a new planter class in the Southwest, they failed to restrict access to the marriage market and the competition for matrimony remained an open, negotiable process. Northern and Southern social critics of early national, Jacksonian, and antebellum America railed against the excesses of spa society in vain; it was a struggle to preserve social exclusivity and passive roles for women that their English counterparts had lost centuries earlier.

Chapter Six: 
Drinking the Same Waters: Sectionalism at the Springs

Early in the first reel of Gone With the Wind Scarlett O'Hara complains to Mammy that she is not tired and would prefer not to take a nap in preparation for the evening's ball. Mammy replies that "Well-brought up young lades takes naps at parties, and it's high time you started behaving yourself."

Scarlett is not convinced: "If we were at Saratoga, I wouldn't notice any Yankee girls taking naps."

"No, and you ain't gonna see no Yankee girls at the ball tonight, neither," retorts Mammy.¹ This exchange between Scarlett and Mammy crystallizes the key tension of springs society in antebellum America: the conflict of customs that occurred when people from North and South gathered together.

During the early nineteenth century few public places offered the opportunity for men and women from the different sections of the United States to meet. Great cities like New York, Philadelphia, Washington (while Congress was in session), and vacation resorts like Newport, Cape May, Nahant, and Long Branch provided some chance for mingling. But at the mineral springs resorts of Virginia's western mountains and Saratoga Springs, an intensive brand of social mixing transpired. It was at these springs that Americans from North and South, East and West gathered for a few weeks or months of relaxation, recuperation, and re-union. If, as Carl

¹ Gone With The Wind, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1969 (Selznick International Pictures, 1939).
Bridenbaugh suggested a half-century ago, the springs served as the rendezvous for America’s fledging aristocracy, they also functioned as a laboratory for the new nation. Here the nation’s social and political leaders experimented with the idea that they formed a coherent culture, as well as a single polity. Brought together by a desire for health and amusement, Americans discovered that, at the springs, they shared much in common. There the boundaries of section were defined, tested, solidified, and broken.

The springs were, above all, a heterogeneous place. Extant hotel ledgers from several New York and Virginia establishments include visitors from thirty three different states and ten foreign countries. The presence of so many “gay and fashionable” people from around the nation and world lent an air of cosmopolitan sophistication to the resorts that was unattainable elsewhere. Drawn mostly from “the wealthy class” of Americans, ladies and gentlemen could be seen “mingling harmoniously” at the springs. During the fashionable season of July and August, “the whole elite of the Union” assembled there.

Descriptions like “elegant and select,” “the most genteel and orderly,” “highly respectable,” “very select and agreeable,” and “the most elegant +

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3 Yellow Sulphur Springs ledger, 1857-1858, Virginia Historical Society [VHS]; Buffalo Lithia Springs ledger, 1857-1858, VHS; Clarendon Hall register, 1860, National Museum of Racing [NMR]; Union Hall register, 1852, Historical Society of Saratoga Springs [HSSSp].
refined of the Southern Country" characterized visitors to the Virginia springs. Perhaps because of the highly stratified structure of Southern society, with its emphasis on the gentleman planter and pristine belle, as well as the remote location of the resorts, the Virginia springs attracted a much more exclusive clientele than did Saratoga. Easily accessible by railroad after 1833, Saratoga attracted a socially mixed crowd, but "the most wealthy, educated, and refined" Americans still set society's tone. Typical visitors in both regions were "people of the first rank in the United States; they are people of fashion, as well as great wealth; they are mostly from the seaports and great towns." In the early 1850s, one guidebook author reported that "To say that all the elite of the nation are annually seen here would not be true; but to say that a large portion of them, and of the learning, wit, beauty, elegance and fashion of the States is here assembled, is certainly no exaggeration."

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6 Mark Pencil, Esq. [Mary Hagner], The White Sulphur Papers, or Life at the Springs of Western Virginia (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839), 40; Dandridge Spotswood diary, 23 July, 1848, p. 20, VHS; John Rutherfoord, Hot Springs, to John C. Rutherfoord, 23 August 1854, Box 3, Folder 1854, John Rutherfoord Papers, Perkins Library, Special Collections, Duke University [Duke]; St. George Coalter Tucker, Sweet Springs, to John Randolph Bryan, Eagle Point, 25 August 1836, Box IV, Folder 42, Brown, Coalter, Tucker Papers (I) Group A, Manuscripts Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary [SWM]; Thomas Gordon Pollock, White Sulphur Springs, to Mother, 3 August 1860, Box, 1, Folder 5 (1860-1865), Abram David Pollock Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill [SHC].


interactions between those members of the elite proved crucial to the future of the Union.

The springs served as a laboratory or testing ground for the idea that America composed a single nation with a coherent ruling elite. In the early years of the new republic the remnants of the colonial gentry made a conscious effort to maintain social order and establish a hierarchy with themselves at the top. According to this largely Federalist outlook, only a well-ordered society with authority and influence emanating from the upper levels could function as a proper republic. But, as Robert Wiebe and Gordon Wood have demonstrated, this attempt to impose a European model of social order failed by 1815, when the victory over Great Britain insured American independence and weakened the claims of those who sought to imitate the colonial parent's social system. Indeed, the prevailing political values of the new nation attacked the idea of an American aristocracy.\textsuperscript{10} Although Wiebe and Wood are correct in their assertion that the elite faded from the national political scene, especially after the triumph of the frontier everyman Andrew Jackson in 1828, they wrongly posit that attempts to form a national elite disappeared after 1815. Instead, Americans continued their efforts to solidify a national aristocracy well into the antebellum era.

These attempts were most successful in individual cities, where local or regional aristocracies developed. Places like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston included particularly powerful and exclusive elites who thwarted the claims of egalitarianism made by many in Jacksonian America. But the parochialism of these fledgling elites, as well as the competition between them for overall prominence in culture and commerce, limited their

national importance. It was only once local and regional elites traveled beyond the physical boundaries of their own urban centers that anything resembling a national elite began to take shape.

One of the few national gathering places during the early republic was the country's capital at Washington. Its location at the geographic center of the nation was designed to unite America, but the alleged city's residential patterns, where Congressmen from different sections of the country lodged in boardinghouses with men from similar areas, limited the possibility of cross-sectional cohesion. Before the genesis of the Jacksonian party system, Washington looked and acted less like a national capital where people coalesced into a national elite than "a series of sectional enclaves." Philadelphia, accepted by most Americans and foreigners as the most cosmopolitan American city during the early decades of the nineteenth century, fared marginally better as a national center. Many Southerners sent their sons and daughters to colleges or finishing schools there, where the next generation developed relationships with their Northern counterparts. Some families even established temporary homes on Philadelphia's Spruce Street, which quickly became known as Carolina Row. These families sought the social and cultural sophistication that they lacked on their plantations, or even in Southern urban centers like Charleston or Mobile, as well as enhanced marriage prospects for their daughters. Although too few in

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number to constitute a national elite, upper-class intermingling in Philadelphia signaled the possibility of constructing an American aristocracy. Similarly, major northern colleges like Princeton, Yale, and, to a lesser extent, Harvard attracted Southern gentlemen but failed to produce an easily identifiable national elite. Even such ostensibly national institutions as the army, navy, and military academies could not overcome the prevailing regional identifications of most Americans.¹³

What the new nation lacked were the cultural centers of high civilization. Looking back on the "extraordinary blankness" of Nathaniel Hawthorne's writings, Henry James wondered what was left to compose American culture. In James' estimation, Hawthorne's America possessed No State, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country-houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools—no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class—no Epsom nor Ascot!

James concluded "that if these things are left out, everything is left out."¹⁴

The American effort to create a self-conscious elite would have to overcome


the paucity of national centers noted by James. Where in England the aristocracy relied on the many institutions that James catalogued, Americans would have to fashion their upper class from whole cloth.

But James erred in his claim that there was "no Epsom" in America. Saratoga Springs and its Virginia counterparts served as a gathering place for those attempting to form an American aristocracy. Unlike Epsom, Bath, Cheltenham, or Tunbridge Wells in Georgian England, the American spas were not one of a number of institutions that served to unite the national gentry. Americans based many of their hopes for creating an elite on the English social and cultural model that they observed and admired at places like Bath. But they failed to realize, as Henry James did later in the century, that the English spas were one of a number of cultural institutions that helped to coalesce a national elite. If Americans were to create a coherent upper class, they would have to do so without the aid of significant national cultural institutions. Their imagined community would be based on the shared interests of leisure activities, class consciousness, and the temporary unity of a few weeks at the springs.

Despite this fragile basis, Americans came remarkably close to creating a national elite and common culture at the springs. Two distinct periods, characterized alternatively by success and failure, marked this experiment in creating a national culture. Between the beginning of the new nation and about 1850, springs in both Virginia and New York shared a common culture where visitors from all parts of the country felt welcome. Henry Clay best

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typified this period and its visitors; a Southerner by birth and persuasion, Clay was firmly a part of that culture while still promoting a national vision through his American System of internal improvements, high tariffs to boost manufactures and farm prices, and a strong national bank. Clay visited the Virginia springs nearly every summer between 1819 and his death in 1852, as well as Saratoga Springs on at least one occasion. Whether in the North or South, Clay mingled effortlessly and was received with what appeared to be genuine cordiality.\textsuperscript{17} His death marked not only the end of a political era, but the decline of a common springs culture as well. The second stage of springs history began near the time of Clay’s death, during the decade of the 1850s. The common springs culture continued during this era, but sectional politics stifled the convivial atmosphere and limited inter-regional exchanges. Radicals like Edmund Ruffin characterized this new era of confrontation and southern nationalism. During his frequent visits to the Virginia springs, Ruffin spouted secessionist rhetoric and worked to “avow that opinion upon every occasion."\textsuperscript{18} By the late-1850s the common cultural and commercial interests that had united the springs dissolved amid sectional political rivalries.

From the earliest stages of springs society in the late eighteenth century, people noticed differences between visitors from various regions. Foreign visitors, often the most perceptive and critical social commentators, noted


that "a better spot can scarcely be selected for witnessing the different races and castes which constitute the heterogeneous population of the Union, and the different styles of beauty which its different latitudes produce." This observation came in 1846, but as early as 1800 the appearance of the diverse springs visitors from all over the republic provoked comment. It was not enough to mention the origins of the guests. Diarists felt the need to categorize them. Southern ladies and gentlemen dressed more elegantly than northerners. Bostonians were much more reserved than New Yorkers. Guests from the Caribbean or Great Britain stuck out even more. According to the English visitor Anne Newport Royall, who observed life at the Virginia springs during the summer of 1826, "the northern people are reserved and distant; the Virginians frank, open and sociable." These differences were not superficial but "as great as between the natural growths and productions of the respective climate."

But the great advantage of the springs between the end of the Revolution and 1850 was that these differences mattered little. Men and women from every state of the Union and every political persuasion were dancing, drinking, and socializing at the springs during the early national and Jacksonian periods "as if they were all members of one and the same family." In the congenial atmosphere of hotel parlors and shaded walks,

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20 Abigail May diary, May 24–June 5, 1800, New York State Historical Association [NYSHA].


22 Solomon Mordecai, Saratoga Springs, to Ellen Mordecai, Warrenton, North Carolina, 17 August 1817, Mordecai Family Papers, SHC.

23 *Six Weeks in Fauquier*, 33.
men from North and South enjoyed conversations about such mundane topics as "the agriculture of the Southern states."  

This was the age and social setting that men like Henry Clay dominated. It seemed that when he attended the springs, Clay instantly became the center of attention. John J. Moorman, the longtime resident physician at White Sulphur Springs who recorded his opinions on many prominent visitors, observed that he had "never seen a man of more easy, lofty and elegant volubility of tongue than Mr. Clay—or who could in his own peculiar and grandiloquent style say more agreeable and well timed things to his associates than he—and never one so happy in adapting his conversation to all sorts of conditions of persons." Always ready to please politicians, merchants, farmers, and especially ladies, Clay possessed a "Natural Gallantry" that won over those around him. Even John Tyler, the former President of the United States, was outshone by Clay during an 1845 visit to White Sulphur Springs. Chagrined by the attention lavished on his political rival, Tyler packed his bags and rode away from the springs "at the very instant that a large crowd with a large band of music was surrounding Mr. Clay's cottage."  

At Saratoga a similar reception awaited Clay. A procession met him outside of town with carriages, horses, and a band, while an artillery salute heralded his arrival. Gentlemen and ladies lined the streets and hotel piazzas to see the procession and hear political speeches in honor of the guest; an invited few then proceeded to a dinner and grand ball in Clay's honor. That evening he

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bumped into his political opponent President Martin Van Buren, who courteously asked, "'I hope I do not obstruct your way.'" According to the diarist Philip Hone, Clay, "the veteran in politics and politeness" replied, "'Not here, certainly.'" Even in New York, a state dominated by the Democracy and hostile to Clay, he engaged the political heir of his arch-rival, Andrew Jackson, with humor and congeniality. It was not that Clay refused to engage in political quarrels, for John Moorman insists that at the Virginia springs Clay readily took up the challenge when offered, but that he did so civilly and sought to resolve differences, rather than divide. The Great Compromiser concerned himself more with politeness than political posturing. At least during the 1830s, political and sectional rivals could get along at the springs.26

Only on rare occasions during the first period of springs history did interactions between visitors contain a hint of tension. Instead of outright political hostility between Northerners and Southerners, commentators noticed an "odd sort of rivalship prevailing among the ladies of the different sections or states of the Union." The women studied, measured, and evaluated each other with "sly looks and glances... like strange gamecocks, in the same barn-yard."27 The rivalry existed as early as 1807, not a date known as a tense moment in sectional politics, when Washington Irving observed that Southern women retained an advantage in the fashionable contest at Northern springs. Conventional wisdom held that "it cannot be expected that a simple cit[izen] of the north can cope with them in style."28 These rivalries, however, never resulted in open conflict or hostility, perhaps because women

26 Nevins, ed., The Diary of Philip Hone, I: 412-418.
in the early republic were not supposed to engage in politics. Instead, the competition may have actually led to greater understanding between the sections. Conversations on contentious subjects like the comparative value and importance of the various states generally ended amicably, regardless of the combatants' gender. James Skelton Gilliam's most troubling situation at Saratoga Springs in 1816 was not the topic of conversation, but the fact that "I am the only person from the Southern states; of course I have a host of Yankees to contend with." But even when he found himself riding in a carriage with a Vermont delegate to the Hartford Convention, an occasion that would cause him to be "anethematised" at home, Gilliam "was vastly pleased however with the gentleman." 29

Gilliam's exchange with the secessionist Yankee was exactly the type of connection many commentators hoped for at the springs. As early as the 1830s writers proposed that shared vacations at the springs would lead Americans "to disclaim the prejudices which had so long influenced their opinion against each other." Upon his return home a visitor would "surrender a portion of that self-complacency which led him to claim a sectional superiority—the offspring of a circumscribed intercourse with the world." 30 Comparatively isolated from the rest of the nation, Southerners acutely felt the need to mix with their Northern countrymen. While they journeyed north and discovered something of Northern society and began to understand it better, few Northerners returned the favor. Observing what he thought was an increase in the number of Northern visitors to the Virginia springs in 1835, Charles Fenno Hoffman sounded an optimistic tone: "If the tour were more common with people of leisure from the north, it would

29 James Skelton Gilliam diary, 10 and 28 July 1816, pp. 22, 30, Library of Virginia.
tend much to root out the prejudices” between the sections.31 The “contact and collision” that resulted from meeting people from another section of the country made “a great deduction of that prejudice of opinion on local and peculiar points.” Southerners benefited when Northerners understood their section, its institutions, and customs better, but interaction improved the Yankees’ lot as well, as “this action upon prejudice is reciprocal; the southerner meets his brother of the north, and forms an intimacy with and an attachment to him, that results necessarily in the production of the best feelings on both sides.”32 Northern guidebook authors agreed with this sentiment in lauding “the most delightful and lasting intimacies” formed between the “distinguished men” who gathered at the springs.33 Mingling together in a purely social setting connected slaveholders and merchant capitalists in a way that politics or commerce never could. Dancing a reel, sharing a meal, and drinking the same putrid waters constituted a shared set of experiences, a common set of social expectations that transcended section. Only at the springs could a young woman from the North dance so well to be considered “quite good enough to be a Southerner.” A Southern acquaintance told the dancer that “this was the highest compliment she ever paid a lady.”34 These contacts, Southern writers hoped, contributed to a process “by which

33 *The Tourist, or Pocket Manual for Travellers on the Hudson River, the Western and Northern Canals and Railroads; the Stage Routes to Niagara Falls; and Down Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence to Montreal and Quebec. Comprising also the Routes to Lebanon, Ballston, and Saratoga Springs, with Many New and Interesting Details* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 6th ed., 1838), 85.
another link is added no doubt to the chains that bind this mighty union."35 Combined with the connections made at Northern colleges, cities, and at other resorts, the prospects of forging a national elite looked good. At such places the search for what Benedict Anderson calls "sociological solidity" was realized—elite Americans went beyond simply imagining that others shared their socio-cultural outlook and class aspirations and encountered their fellow would-be aristocrats face-to-face.36

At the same time that guidebooks authors and springs promoters hailed the unifying possibilities of the springs, larger social and economic changes began to divide the resorts. In 1833 the nation's third railroad, the Schenectady and Saratoga, shortened the travel time to New York's springs from days to hours. Where once a hodgepodge of sailboats and carriages transported visitors from the eastern seaboard to Saratoga Springs, by the 1830s an efficient system of steamboats and railroads whisked passengers to their destinations. Seasonal crowds now numbered in the thousands rather than hundreds, and the quality of those guests changed as well. "Every would-be fashionable" could now afford the rail fare and needed only a few free days, rather than weeks, to visit the springs. Southerners, used to a much more exclusive social world than their Northern counterparts, seemed especially disconcerted by the diverse crowd they met at Saratoga, a town that reveled in its openness. One Southern springs promoter commented that "Saratoga Springs, from the very facility, and comparatively small expense, at which they can be visited, are no longer the same fashionable summer resorts

36 Anderson, Imagined Communities, 26-35.
they were wont to be.” Instead of a select gathering of gentlemen and belles, visitors from “every class, colour, and condition in the state” arrived at Saratoga hoping to enjoy the fashionable scene. Southerners were horrified to discover that “the fair daughters of the millionaire are not unfrequently vexed and mortified to find themselves rivaled, if not eclipsed, in the ball-room, by the blooming misses who lean on the arm or one with no prouder title than papa’s tailor, or boot-maker.”37 The amusements, scenery, health-giving waters, and opportunity to meet powerful, rich, and famous people at Saratoga attracted Southerners, who in turn were repelled by the heterogeneous crowd. A columnist for the Southern Literary Messenger declared that he passed his time pleasantly at the Virginia springs, but added that he would not “find it so at Saratoga, amid such an oppressive throng—such a rabble-route as that must be.”38

Southerners insisted that life at the Virginia springs was different. Located on the nearly inaccessible western slope of the Allegheny Mountains, the Virginia springs were far less convenient than Saratoga. Railroads did not reach the South’s premier resort, White Sulphur Springs, until after the Civil War. As a result the vast majority of visitors to the Virginia springs were Southerners from the wealthier strata of society. Only they had the time and money to make the extended journey to the springs. This isolation and homogeneity led one visitor to comment that “the general interchange of civilities exist to a greater degree among the company at these springs than at those of the North.”39 A Northern writer agreed that “the free and easy air of every thing in and about the rural establishment, the haughty and erect stateliness of the men, and the abject suppleness of the servants, all formed a

37 Six Weeks at Fauquier, v-vi.
39 Pencil, White Sulphur Papers, 42.
strong contrast, inexplicable in words, but instantly comprehended by the eye, between the modes of the South and the North, as compared with my remembrances of Saratoga.”

But these comparisons may have been overwrought. They did not square with many of the actions and intentions of visitors to the Virginia springs and the proprietors of those establishments. Social interactions at any Virginia spring rivaled Saratoga for competitiveness, anxiety over social status, and pretension. And hotel proprietors in Virginia certainly wanted more, not less, business. Their building expansions, joint stock incorporations, advertising efforts, and involvement in road-building and railroad ventures spoke to a desire for an expanded clientele. On the same page that he lambasted Saratoga Springs for being too accessible, a guidebook author praised Fauquier White Sulphur Springs, near Fredericksburg, Virginia and a rail spur, for being “within three days of easy and comfortable travel from Boston.” Many Southerners described a much more diverse picture of life at the Virginia springs than some of Saratoga’s critics would have had their readers believe. William Burke, the tireless promoter of the

41 See Click, *The Spirit of the Times*, 92-93, 98-99; Lewis, “Ladies and Gentlemen on Display,” 8, 16, and Chap. 6, “A Competitive Community of Elite Southerners.” Lewis acknowledges the competition between springs visitors for status, but limits the contest to members of the elite. In her analysis the Southern gentry defined themselves at the springs by excluding those who did not meet their expectations and standards. The result was a consolidation of the upper class (391-393, 476-480). In her view the springs served as a sort of finishing school for the Southern gentry, where they learned to make a mark in society, behave properly, exhibit good manners and sensibility, extend their connections with other members of the elite, and possibly find a suitable spouse. The social competition at Lewis’ springs reinforced the existing order, rather than creating a new synthesis. In my interpretation, the competition at both the Virginia springs and Saratoga Springs loosened or, at least for a moment, cast the class lines of antebellum society into doubt. People left the springs not simply satisfied that the established order had been upheld, but with a new conception of the social composition of antebellum society. The competition forged a new social synthesis. This is a subtle disagreement, but one that depicts two very different social settings at the springs and their influence on nineteenth-century society and culture.
42 *Six Weeks at Fauquier*, viii (original emphasis).
Virginia springs over Saratoga, wrote that “a hundred pictures might be drawn of oddities, absurdities, eccentricities, nonentities, ambitious mamas, anxious papas, fascinating misses, agreeable spinsters, delectable fops, twaddling gossips, and stupid book-makers” at White Sulphur Springs. And while Virginia’s promoters hesitated to criticize the society at their springs, foreign commentators offered stinging analyses. The British traveler George Featherstonhaugh described “old sick men, young boys, husbands of charming wives, fathers of beautiful daughters, all in the same pickle together, mingling with the most extraordinary looking tobacco-chewing, expectorating, and villainous looking nondescripts” at the Virginia springs. The Old Dominion held no title to exclusivity.

Southerners’ dis-ease with the social mixing that took place at both the Virginia springs and Saratoga may have had less to do with social status than the manner in which it was achieved. Status in the South grew from landholding, inherited wealth, and reputable family connections; these same bases existed in the North, but merchants, bankers, and professional men of means could enter the social elite much more easily at Saratoga than at self-consciously exclusive places like the Virginia springs. Even so, Virginians balked at the introduction of status based on wealth alone. The gossip writer Mary Windle was dismayed to find at White Sulphur Springs “some few pious worshippers at the altar of mammon; human beings so gold-nurtured that poverty is to them the one evil of human life.”

43 Burke, The Virginia Mineral Springs, 50.
44 George William Featherstonhaugh, Excursion Through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices (London: John Murray, 1844), I: 38. By the 1850s the increased ease of travel and the popularization of the springs by travel writers and guidebook authors created a more diverse clientele at the springs (Robert S. Conte, “The Celebrated White Sulphur Springs of Greenbrier: Nineteenth-Century Travel Accounts” West Virginia History 42 [1981]: 210-211).
the introduction of new measures of status brought about by the Market Revolution and the infiltration of commerce (both long present in Southern society) into the bastion of elite Southern society, the Virginia springs. These criticisms might be seen as less a reaction to a changing social situation than as a yearning for a fastly fading, if not long gone, image of a more ideal South.

Saratoga’s visitors enjoyed a much more comfortable relationship with wealth and its modes of creation. Wealth and family connections continued to influence entry into the “exclusives” of Saratoga society, but fashion was an “undeniable prerequisite.” Most of Saratoga’s visitors came from the “honest citizens” of the nation who wore “the latest Parisian fashion” and mingled with the select. For these people wealth, however meager, was the greatest asset. “Wealth,” wrote George William Curtis, “will socially befriend a man at Newport or Saratoga, better than any similar spot in the world.”

Different economic systems and varying levels of acceptance of the emerging commercial society affected springs society. The more agrarian South and more commercial North shared many economic assumptions, but they were moving at disparate paces; the Market Revolution spurred economic development in the North much faster than in the South. This is not to say that the South eschewed the market or adhered to a pre-capitalist mentalité. As James Oakes has shown, Southern slaveholders were a highly mobile class who embraced the market and its potential for amassing fantastic wealth in a short time. Any planter who made his money in the latest cotton

boom, and plenty of them from the Old Southwest attended the springs, benefitted from the market economy. But with the stories of success came tales of failure and economic ruin, which lent a healthy ambivalence to Southern views of the market. The North, while also unsure of the market's consequences, embraced more enthusiastically than the South.

The rapidly developing industrial sector in the North created enough wealth for Northern merchant families to compete with Southern planters, who had long enjoyed a greater degree of relative economic prosperity, in ostentatious display. Cities like New York became the center of American fashion, and Northern ladies seized on the opportunity to eclipse their Southern rivals. By 1858 Eliza Potter could boast with confidence that the "great rivalry" between Southern and Northern fashion at the springs had shifted in favor of the North, an advantage it "kept with unrivaled success." That same year a much more intense competition stirred at the leading Virginia resort, White Sulphur Springs. A negative review of Northern fashion appeared in a Washington newspaper and provoked a confrontation. Evidently the Northern ladies apprehended "a prejudice against their dress and appearance" on the part of the Southern guests after reading the article. In an attempt to draw out that opinion, the Yankee ladies held a fashion show. Whose dress was superior, Northerners' or Southerners'? To settle the dispute a committee of ladies from both sections weighed the issue. A Northern member of the jury brought forth "involuntary reminiscences of Mr. Sumner" with her vilification of Southern style. Moving beyond a critique of fashion, she lambasted "the

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whole Southern country in general." Hoping to avoid further controversy, the committee "condemned to flames" the short "sketch" that started the entire conflagration and deemed the author in need of "reprimand and punishment." In the hyper-sensitive political climate of the late 1850s, even a newspaper column on dress styles could provoke a sectional crisis.51

Such rivalries and confrontations developed at the springs not so much from the sections' diverging economic systems, but from the growing belief that North and South were increasingly distinct. Foreign visitors first noticed the sectional differences between the sections during the 1830s and 1840s, which they assessed in great detail. The result was an elaborate typology of American characters. By 1851 Eliot Warburton's analysis that Southerners were more "expensive in their mode of living, off-hand in their manner, but little nasal in their accent, gay and courteous—the northerns more moderate and tolerant, better informed and more sincere," sounded like a broken record.52 But only after years of such comments by George Featherstonhaugh, Frederick Marryat, Harriet Martineau and countless others did Americans begin to place much significance on the differences between the sections. As late as 1859 Mary Windle, a Washington gossip columnist who presumably had seen her share of sectional types from her perch in the nation's capital city, pronounced herself "forcibly struck by the contrast" between representatives of the various parts of the country during a visit to White Sulphur Springs, Virginia. Flummoxed, she asked, "Why is this? The blood of both, we presume, flows down to them from the Magna Carta." In her final analysis Windle concluded that despite their common origins, the character of Northerners and Southerners had diverged. She doubted whether

51 Windle, Life at Washington, 37-42. Apparently one of Windle's gossip columns, which she wrote for a Washington newspaper, ignited the controversy.
Northern refinement still existed, but confidently declared that “into whichever position in life a Southern gentleman may be thrown, the gentleman is apparent.” Unlike his Northern counterpart, when a Southerner appeared in public “the stamp of superiority is equally apparent.” Americans had recognized their regional differences all along, but only during the glaring light of political conflict between the sections did these blemishes assume the character of scabrous sores instead of quaint beauty marks.

Yet Southerners continued to proclaim the potential benefits of bringing the nation together at the springs. The desire for pleasant exchanges and unity had been a worthy project in the 1830s, but by the 1850s the same pleas acquired a new sense of urgency. William Burke, a prominent springs physician, proprietor, and promoter, echoed the requests of his predecessors in his 1853 guidebook to the Virginia springs. Using a medical metaphor, Burke urged Northerners and Southerners to journey to “the social heart” of the republic, Virginia, and visit its healing springs. He advised Americans that “If your [blood]streams have been rendered turbid by prejudice; if too much carbonic acid or unwholesome bile has mingled in their currents, she will urge you on to the healthy lungs in her parental bosom; she will oxygenize your ill blood in the pure atmosphere of her mountains; she will render it ruddy and healthy, and send it back bounding with impulse, inspiring fraternal affections and sympathies; and connecting the frame of our social and political Union by tissues that shall not decay, and ligaments that can never be loosened.” In Burke’s diagnosis, “Intercourse, free intercourse only, is necessary to make the two great sections appreciate each

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53 Windle, *Life at Washington*, 164 (original emphasis).
other, and to put an end to that pragmatical, offensive, fanatic meddling, which has served to alienate a generous, chivalric, and warm-hearted portion of this great family of republics.” Simple contact between the sections would heal the festering wound of sectionalism.54

Northerners shared Burke’s desire to avoid controversy and mingle with citizens of their rival section. The travel writer George William Curtis hoped that by meeting at Saratoga, Northerners and Southerners would “learn from contact and sympathy a sweeter temper and a more catholic consideration, so that the summer flowers we went to wreathe may prove not the garland of an hour, but the firmly linked chain of an enduring union.”55 Curtis’s language here is interesting. Unlike Burke, he opts not to capitalize “Union.” And his use of floral imagery seems an allusion to the myriad political compromises between North and South that wilted with time. But like a previously mentioned Southern source, he conceives of the Union as a linked chain. Both Burke and Curtis sought to strengthen, not weaken, that chain through the congregation of Americans at the springs. So important was the springs experience to the unity of the nation that Catharine Maria Sedgwick proposed that Saratoga “be considered as a sort of Jerusalem, and an annual gathering there a national jubilee, when we are emancipated from something worse than political slavery,—for these sectional prejudices are chains and manacles to kindly feelings—dark prison houses to generous thought.” Only on the “neutral ground” of Saratoga could a situation exist where “the warmth and eloquence of the southerner melts the ice of the northern man, and finds and feels the generous current that flows beneath it.” At Saratoga “‘sectional

54 Burke, The Virginia Mineral Springs, 292-293.
55 Curtis, Lotus-Eating, 121-122.
prejudice’ vanishes.”\textsuperscript{56} As Benedict Anderson has demonstrated, print culture served as an effective tool in constructing a national consciousness by allowing geographically scattered members of the elite to visualize each other through print. By reading about life at the springs and the unifying cultural forces at work there, Americans might forge a national culture.\textsuperscript{57}

Despite the plans and pleas of various writers to turn the springs into a political neutral ground, controversy still appeared. Even during the earlier, more congenial period of springs history, quarrels between the sections arose, but were usually easily resolved. Several Virginia springs named groups of cabins “Nullifier’s Row” or “States Rights’ Row” during the Nullification Crisis of Andrew Jackson’s first term, and during the summer of 1835 one columnist overheard groups at the Virginia springs “denouncing the whole army of abolitionists and lamenting that Tappan and Thompson did not find it convenient to visit.”\textsuperscript{58} Presumably, the Southerners had a few choice words to share with the noted abolitionists. But few took the threat seriously, referring to the Nullifiers as weak and sickly, a group of gentlemen whose chances of breaking up the Union seemed doubtful.\textsuperscript{59} Even an 1835 confrontation over male slaves singing love songs in front of white women in Virginia failed to ignite real trouble. The South Carolinians marched out of the room, but “produced no effect for [the next] night there was a repetition” of the performance. During the 1830s slavery had not yet reached the status of a unifying issue that rallied Southerners to the banner of

\textsuperscript{57} Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities}, 37-46, 74-80.
\textsuperscript{59} John Pendleton Kennedy, Sweet Springs, to Peter Hoffman Cruse, Baltimore, 4 August 1832, Section 2, Peter Hoffman Cruse Papers, VHS.
secession. South Carolinians might provide a revolutionary vanguard, but the rest of the South was not ready to follow. At the springs especially, slavery was not yet an inflammatory issue. One visitor from the Carolinas declared that Virginians cared very little about the institution and were “getting rid of this kind of property as fast as possible—and in a few years will have no interest in common with us on the subject.”

During this early period of springs history Americans still conceived of themselves as a single nation. They recognized the differences between people from various parts of the country, but saw that diversity as a charming part of the nation’s vastness, not an unresolvable conflict.

The observation of social differences eventually crystallized into a belief that North and South were fundamentally different. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the South found itself at odds with the concerns and culture of the rest of the nation. The social mobility that accompanied the expansion of slavery beyond the tidewater and across the Southwest threatened the South’s ruling aristocracy, who disapproved of the drive for power and money evident in so many of the nouveau riche planters from Louisiana, Alabama, or Mississippi; the coastal elite preferred family ties and personal virtue as the measure of social worth. The agrarian model touted by many long-established Southern families, who themselves engaged in market transactions, could not negate the capitalism at the heart of the Southern economy. In response to this challenge to their cultural hegemony, the South’s leading intellectuals developed a sentimental literature that idolized the genteel planter of old in opposition to the greedy Yankee. According to William Taylor, the plantation novels that developed during the 1830s romanticized the past and provided a set of alternative cultural

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60 Jonathan Berkeley Grimball diary, 28 July 1835, I: 28-29, SHC.
values which emphasized chivalry rather than ambition. Conversely, Northern authors began criticizing Southern society in works like Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The cultural divide between the Southern idyll and brutal descriptions of the horrors of slavery increased during the antebellum period and furthered the distrust between the sections. Authors from both sections called upon a romanticized past to interpret the social and economic transformations of modern America. Progressive Yankess and nostalgic Cavaliers looked to the golden age of the plantation South to justify their position in the emerging order of democratic capitalism.\(^{61}\) In this context the efforts by many to promote the springs as a neutral ground seem quixotic and perhaps desperate. But by realizing that a cultural gap existed and attempting to bridge it, guidebook authors and social commentators sought to accomplish the one thing that they believed could unify the nation—construct a national culture based on the shared experience of springs life.

Ultimately their efforts failed, as the widening social gulf between North and South disrupted the placidity of springs life. Take, for example, the experience of the Graham family of New York City during their visit to Saratoga Springs. While walking their hotel piazza they met a Mr. Ferris from Kentucky, who in Robert Graham’s opinion paid a bit too much attention to Graham’s cousin Louisa. He noted that Ferris “invariably comes up to Louisa the instant we are on the Piazza—I got rather tired of this, + more so because his conversation was anything but agreeable—he would relate long love stories about young ladies whom he had met under very auspicious circumstances—attempted to define the word Love +c +c. so that I became

disgusted with the man, and as Lu said she did not like him I determined to put a stop to it." But Ferris persisted. The next morning he accosted Louisa on the piazza, causing her to flee upstairs to her room. Robert Graham then confronted Ferris for his overly familiar behavior and asked "if he did not know it was very impolite to address a Lady when she was walking with another Gentleman." Ferris pleaded ignorance of this social convention and replied "that in Kentucky 'a young lady never walked with her cousin when she could get any better.'" Angered, Graham asked if Ferris intended to insult him, which the Kentuckian denied. Instead, he declared himself "much obliged to you for informing me upon some points of etiquette which we know nothing about in Kentucky." Deciding that Saratoga "was too fashionable for him," Ferris took Graham's advice that "he probably would enjoy himself better in Kentucky." Having successfully resolved the difference in sectional manners, Graham escorted Ferris to the next train out of town. Graham and Ferris disagreed over proper etiquette toward a lady, but their misunderstanding was rooted in regional conceptions of appropriate relations between the sexes. One behaved differently in Kentucky than at Saratoga Springs. Here, the optimistic predictions of springs promoters that interactions between Northerners and Southerners would "render the Union of the States more perfect" failed to come true.

During the early years of springs society, slavery and sectionalism posed little threat to the pleasant life there; they were instead topics for humorous observations. It was not until the later decades, after King Cotton had united

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the South around the profitability of slavery, that sectional tensions divided springs visitors. By the 1850s slavery, far more than dress styles or political affiliation, interrupted the relaxing atmosphere. The personal liberty laws and Fugitive Slave Act of the 1850s combined to create a climate of fear and hostility. Southerners hesitated to bring their personal slaves along on their summer excursions to the North lest they be corrupted by abolitionists and convinced to flee their masters and escape to freedom.64 Conversely, Northerners feared that free blacks or escaped slaves might be recaptured or sold into slavery. A runaway slave like Harriet Jacobs could look forward to her trip “to the quiet of the country” at Saratoga, but discovered herself “in the midst of a swarm of Southerners. I looked round me with fear and trembling,” she noted, “dreading to see someone who would recognize me” and return her to slavery.65 The intrusion of the peculiar institution, here in the person of the escaped slave Jacobs, upset the springs’ pleasant society.

Perhaps more troublesome to the congenial atmosphere at the springs were the interactions between Southerners and free blacks in the North. Accustomed to servile African-Americans, most Southerners were unprepared for the assertive behavior of Northern blacks. A perceived affront to a black waiter at Cape May, New Jersey resulted in a general riot between Southern tourists and the resort’s black waiters.66 Similarly, at Saratoga a gentleman from Georgia “slit the nose of one of ‘Africa’s Sons’ who was an impertinent waiter a few evenings since.” To counter the boldness of the free black waiters, who dominated the profession at Saratoga, one Virginian

64 For an excellent fictional account of slave escapes at Saratoga Springs, see Emily Catharine Pierson, Jamie Parker, the Fugitive (Hartford: Brockett, Fuller, and Company, 1851), 61-65, 122-128. See also John Hope Franklin, A Southern Odyssey: Travelers in the Antebellum North (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 131-139.
66 Lexington Gazette, 15 August 1850, p. 3.
wished “that the South Carolinians had the insolent negroes of the North in
their cotton fields for a term of months each year.” Perhaps then Southerners
would not have to face the discomfiting prospect of comparatively
unobsequious African-Americans.67 Whether the presence and actions of free
black servants caused the social confrontations, or if such events occurred
because of political battles, the situation was worsening.

But it was not only the rude waiters and domestics that irritated
Southern visitors to Northern springs; a larger climate of hostility was
emerging. During the summer of 1860 a parade of carriages, a brass band, and
bonfires heralded the arrival of a Democratic candidate for President, Stephen
Douglas, at Saratoga Springs. Such demonstrations were commonplace in
American politics, but a speech calling “the people of the South a rabble,
traitors, etc.” was not. Emboldened by the inflammatory rhetoric, the crowd
“put a barrel of tar and resin in the street and set fire to it.”68 If supporters of
the conservative Democratic Party acted this way, the radical Republicans
must have come near to rioting. But less blatant displays of sectional
animosity effectively communicated northern hostility to slavery. When
Thomas J. Jackson, then a professor at the Virginia Military Institute (and
later the Confederate general known as “Stonewall”), made the rounds of the
Northern watering places and fashionable resorts during the summer of 1860,
he “heard and saw enough to awaken his fears that it might portend civil
war.” Jackson met a pleasant Baptist minister who proved to be a staunch
abolitionist. The minister's true colors were revealed in “a violent political
dispute” with one of Jackson’s friends. Even though the minister appeared

67 P.H. Aylett, Saratoga Springs, to Mother, King William County, Virginia, 24 August 1845,
Folder 1, Section 7, Aylett Family Papers, VHS; Franklin, A Southern Odyssey, 148-149.
68 “From Saratoga,” New York World, 21 July 1860; as quoted in Sigmund Diamond, trans. and

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civil to Jackson and enjoyed “pleasant relations” throughout their stay, sectional tensions lurked just below the surface of politeness.69

In this hostile climate neither the Virginia springs nor Saratoga beckoned to travelers from outside their respective region. Why should slaveholders “subject themselves to outrage and insult” in the North, asked Southern editors, “when their native mountains abound in such attractive places of resort?”70 Boycotting Northern institutions was a tactic adopted by students and churches as well. During the 1850s every major Protestant denomination divided over the issue of slavery and several Southern branches formed their own colleges, presumably to be filled by Southern students who started abandoning their northern universities around the same time.71 If the hotel ledgers of two smaller Virginia springs are any indication, Southerners echoed this trend. Almost 99 percent of visitors during the summers of 1857-1858 listed Southern places of residence.72 A Northern paper confirmed this trend when it found few Northern visitors at the Virginia springs.73 Southern visitors to Saratoga likewise noted “very few here from the South” during their visits to Saratoga, but hotel records disagree.74

69 Mary Anna Jackson, Memoirs of Stonewall Jackson, by His Widow (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside, 1993 [1895]), 133-134.
70 Lexington Gazette, 29 August 1850.
72 Buffalo Lithia Springs guest register, 1857-1858, VHS; Yellow Sulphur Springs guest register, 1857-1858, VHS. See also Franklin, A Southern Odyssey, 205-206.
74 John C. Ehringhaus, Saratoga Springs, 21 July 1850, Hayes Collection, SHC.
Table V: Origin of 1850s Springs Visitors\textsuperscript{75}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virginia:</th>
<th>Slave States</th>
<th>Free States</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>N</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo Lithia Springs, 1857</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buffalo Lithia Springs, 1858</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yellow Sulphur Springs, 1857</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Sulphur Springs, 1858</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saratoga:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Hall, 1852</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>4214</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarendon Hall, 1860</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apparently Northern tourists, not Southerners, heeded “the many threats contained in Southern prints” to stay at home. With a sizable number of Southern visitors at Saratoga finding the company there “mostly a sociable + agreeable lot,” many felt that “this great bug-a-boo of disunion is growing more and more ridiculous.”\textsuperscript{76} Northerners and Southerners continued to mingle at Saratoga Springs with little incident and a charming level of enjoyment. Even a prominent proponent of Southern rights like Jefferson Davis could say in 1858, after touring Northern resorts, that “the difference [between the sections] is less than I had expected.”\textsuperscript{77} The view from Saratoga was fairly benign on the questions of slavery and secession, with relatively little fear of disunion.

Opinion at the Virginia springs proved far different. There men like Edmund Ruffin of Virginia, a prominent agricultural reformer, essayist, and

\textsuperscript{75} Visitors were categorized based on the legality of slavery in their state or territory. Forty six to fifty percent of foreign visitors were from Canada or Great Britain, while thirty two to thirty percent came from the Caribbean (the remainder were mostly from Europe). Data from Buffalo Lithia Springs Register, 1857-1858, VHS; Yellow Sulphur Springs Register, 1857-1858, VHS; Union Hall Register, 1852, HSSp; Clarendon Hall Register, NMR. I have not located any registers from an earlier period.


\textsuperscript{77} As quoted in Dunbar Rowland, ed., Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist: His Letters, Papers, and Speeches (New York: J. Little and Ives, 1923), III: 356.
promoter of Southern nationalism and independence, "used every suitable occasion to express my opinion, & the grounds thereof, that the slave-holding states should speedily separate from the others, & form a separate confederacy." His initial efforts met with little success, however, as many people agreed in principle that secession was necessary to ward off Northern attempts to "destroy our institution of slavery, & thus ruin the southern states," but were unwilling to express these feelings openly or commit to actual rebellion. But Ruffin persevered, hoping "to be a worthy & efficient advocate of the cause."78 He devoted the next several years to traveling across the South dressed in a Virginia-made suit of home-grown cotton, filling sympathetic ears with talk of secession and publishing and speaking on the cause at every opportunity.79

Ruffin faced a difficult task convincing Southerners of the wisdom and necessity of secession, especially during his visits to the springs. Even in 1860, when secession "furnish[ed] most of the subjects of conversation here among the men," Ruffin found himself "alone, as an avowed disunionist." Yet he continued to "avow that opinion upon every occasion."80 Perhaps the social scene at the Virginia springs was too relaxing for political turmoil. As late as 1853 a slaveholder and abolitionist were observed debating "the subject of slavery—for three days together—without quarrelling."81 Rather than being dominated by radicals like Ruffin, many at the springs agreed with the moderate John Pendleton Kennedy, who called secessionism "a flame which

must burn itself out.” Even as late as 1860 some newspapers reported little talk of politics at the springs. Instead visitors seemed “more intent upon discussing the virtues of the waters and the excellencies of the table.”

Apparently the congenial atmosphere established by Henry Clay persisted. As the historian John McCardell has written, Southern nationalism and secession were not preordained. North and South did not compose two distinctly different sections or peoples on the eve of the Civil War. They shared many assumptions about society, economics, politics, and thought, but slavery lent an ideological charge to these topics. It was only when the South perceived that the political system was failing to protect its interests, notably slavery, that secession gained credibility beyond a small minority of fervent nationalists. Few Southerners supported the idea of an independent Southern nation during the Jacksonian era. Only the efforts of radical nationalists like Ruffin and the growing inability of the national political system to solve the controversy over the westward expansion of slavery persuaded Southerners of the efficacy of secession and the viability of a separate nation.

Against the majority of Southern opinion and despite little encouragement from those they met, Ruffin and his fellow fire-eaters continued to militate for secession. These nationalists, especially the South Carolinians, were conspicuous for their “hostility to the Federal government.” According to John Pendleton Kennedy, they were a group “distempered with nullification and Disunion” and a generation “educated in the most settled hatred of the United States.” They eagerly and readily

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82 John Pendleton Kennedy diary, 29 July 1851, John Pendleton Kennedy Papers, West Virginia University [WVU]; Lexington Gazette, 2 August 1860.
84 Kennedy diary, 29 July and 1 August 1851, WVU.
engaged the few Northerners still coming to the Virginia springs, like the Democrat from Maine who bickered with a fellow Democrat from South Carolina, each getting in a number of "hard licks." Any controversy, however mild, served as ammunition for secessionist armaments. For instance, after its corporate reorganization in the late 1850s, White Sulphur Springs offered land for the construction of a Protestant church. The Methodists quickly took up the offer, erecting a church under the auspices of the Baltimore Conference, which had remained in the Northern camp after the 1845 schism over slavery divided the denomination into Northern and Southern branches. Outraged that donors to the church's construction fund "were aiding to strengthen an abolitionist religious association," Edmund Ruffin and a few associates exposed the situation and "tried to excite and keep up this ferment." Eventually an amicable settlement was reached in which both branches of Methodism held title to the building. The issue of controlling the church was "of but small amount" in Ruffin's opinion. Although he delighted in thwarting the advance of abolitionism, his larger goal was to draw "more attention to the strange & great abuse" Northern institutions inflicted on Southerners. For Ruffin, the church issue was a stalking horse for proslavery arguments and secession. As an opportunistic political operative, few matched his efforts and achievements.

Few Northerners, especially politicians, dared venture into such a tense situation during the 1850s. Those with the temerity to visit the Virginia springs generally fared poorly. President Millard Fillmore, a native New Yorker, met with an "entirely tame & indifferent" reception at the White Sulphur Springs in 1851. Even when John Pendleton Kennedy, a well-

85 Charles William Ashby, Healing Springs, to wife, 24 July 1860, Folder 1, Charles William Ashby Papers, VHS.
respected Southern author and social arbiter, escorted the President into the ballroom, people greeted Fillmore with "no enthusiasm, no demonstration." The committee appointed to receive the President "seemed not to know what to do, they were afraid of being too attentive so fell into the opposite." As one woman put it, "Never was a man treated with less attention." The South Carolinians at the springs continued their "narrow absurd conduct." Carolina ladies refused to attend the Presidential ball, and of the many male luminaries from the state at the springs, "not one was introduced" to President Fillmore. The waiters alone, all of whom were African-American and "decorated with cockades & streamers," marked the special occasion.87 A similar reception awaited the fifteenth President of the United States, James Buchanan. No matter that Buchanan was a Northern man with Southern principles and a signer of the controversial pro-slavery Ostend Manifesto. During his visit to White Sulphur Springs, Virginia in 1857, "all the South Carolina gentlemen refused to hold any intercourse" with him. An observer stated the obvious: this rudeness revealed "a very bitter feeling in that state on the slavery question."88

Moving beyond confronting slavery's enemies, Southerners turned the springs into an advertisement for proslavery ideology. Slave laborers at the springs were happy, industrious, clean, and contented. Southern nationalists pointed to men like the bath keeper at White Sulphur Springs, a free black and returned Liberian colonist, who "greatly prefers his present employment" to his service as a judge in the West African settlement.89 Another author wished that Harriet Beecher Stowe could see the "healthy... yet evidently not

87 Jane Caroline North diary, 11 and 29 August 1851, Pettigrew Family Papers, SHC.
88 F. Stone, White Sulphur Springs, to William B. Stone, Charles County, Maryland, August 1857, GBA.
overworked or oppressed” slaves at the springs and the “noble representation of slave life in the South” they offered. Windle, Life at the White Sulphur Springs; or, Pictures of a Pleasant Summer (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1857), 32.

Rather than being mistreated, slaves led a relatively pleasant life at the springs: the labor was supposedly light, whether waiting tables or cleaning rooms. The author of an earlier guidebook anticipated the proslavery panegyrics of George Fitzhugh: “there is more equality, good and kindly feeling, existing in the South between master and slave, or the whites and blacks, than between the master and his hired white servant, in the North.” Six Weeks at Fauquier, 51-52. On proslavery thought, see George Fitzhugh, Cannibals All! or, Slaves Without Masters, ed. C. Vann Woodward (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Drew Gilpin Faust, ed., The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1981).

By contrast, it was claimed, workers at Saratoga Springs labored in “subterranean stories for the better engenderment of damp, mildew, and malaria.” Such abysmal conditions compelled “the menial occupants to retain a becoming sense of their semi-humanity, by existing in a state of semi-interment.” In short, the author continued, “Nothing can exceed the dreariness of... servant life in the Northern watering-places.” In reality, free African-Americans men at Saratoga enjoyed a degree of relative prosperity and comfort. They dominated the table-waiting and musical trades, where they commanded a limited degree of respect and decent pay. Many lived in boarding houses run by other free blacks or in the upper stories and outbuildings of hotels, not the “subterranean stories” described by Southern authors. The more miserable jobs at Saratoga were divided by sex, not race: laundresses and maids were women at the bottom of the social order, whether Irish, French-Canadian, or
African-American.\textsuperscript{93} Southerners conveniently ignored these facts. They eagerly alerted Northerners to the hypocrisy of the free-labor system, in which wage laborers often lived less comfortably than Southern chattel. If only Northern visitors could witness the “happy, smiling countenances of the African race” at the Virginia springs, they would abandon their “former efforts to dissolve a relation fraught with so much happiness to the domestic.”\textsuperscript{94} Southerners claimed their region differed from the caricatures in Northern prints, and that if Yankees visited the South social tensions would disappear.

Despite attracting an elite clientele from around the country, Northern and Southern springs could not form a national culture or elite. Their commonalities included an ability to stifle sectional disagreements over politics, elite assumptions about class stability and gender norms, a national consensus on medical therapeutics, shared aesthetic ideals, and a desire to do anything possible to promote the springs and make them profitable. A national springs culture existed during the first half of the nineteenth century, albeit with regional variations. As strong as this culture was, it could not unite the nation. Elite Americans may have enjoyed the same springs experience, but on one crucial issue, their politics differed.


\textsuperscript{94} “The Virginia Springs,” SLM, III (May 1837): 281.
Conclusion

Slavery disturbed the deceptively genial atmosphere of springs social life. It disrupted what writers envisioned as a cordial gathering of Americans forging nonpartisan, national bonds of unity. An English visitor found his American hosts pleasant and agreeable until they discussed "the black spot on the brightness of this country's Future...; the cancer eating into the giant frame, deforming its beauty, withering its strength—the awful curse of SLAVERY." It was a subject that "cannot be quietly argued or reasoned upon—the very word rouses the angry passions like an insult." Tempers rose at the mere mention of the word, shattering the facade of politeness.¹ Slavery even interrupted the springs' main business, courtship. When a "fair nullifier from South Carolina" attempted to introduce "an anti-slavery beauty" from New York to a Southern friend, she demurred. "He might be pro-slavery; and if so she should not be introduced to him."²

In this atmosphere, opinion swung eventually in favor of secessionists like Edmund Ruffin. His constant lobbying and insistence on the necessity of secession helped, but political developments around the nation increased Southern nationalistic sentiment as well. The Kansas-Nebraska Act and subsequent conflict in Bleeding Kansas convinced many Americans that compromise was no longer possible. Even optimistic observers like George William Curtis lost faith. While a few years earlier he had lauded the

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potential of the springs to unite the nation, by 1856 he committed to radical abolitionism. In his speech “The Duty of the American Scholar to Politics and the Times,” Curtis railed against the slave power and the inability of Northerners to counter its advances. Pointing to events like the beating of Senator Charles Sumner and the Kansas-Nebraska bill, he demanded action. “Brothers! the call has come to us,” he told the audience at Wesleyan University. “I call upon you to determine whether this great experiment in human freedom, which has been the scorn of despotism, shall by its failure be also our sin and shame. I call upon you to defend the hope of the world.” Curtis continued to remind his audience of their bleeding comrades on the Kansas plains and the heroic parallels to historic battles at Marathon and Lexington. In conclusion, he declared that “The fight is fierce; the issue is with God, but God is good.” Having moved from his early optimism of uniting the Union to a more pessimistic position that required the defeat of the “slave power,” Curtis’ transformation represents the rapid escalation of tensions and the disintegration of civility at the springs and throughout the nation in general. The man who had once hoped that Americans would “learn from contact and sympathy a sweeter temper” now campaigned for the Free Soil party and spoke to abolitionist audiences across the Northeast.3

Curtis’ position was one that Edmund Ruffin would have welcomed because it radicalized and polarized the discourse over slavery and likely drove more Southerners toward his cause. Indeed, Ruffin’s own powers of persuasion seemed insufficient. During his 1856, 1858, and 1859 trips to the Virginia springs, Ruffin met few who supported him wholeheartedly. In his many discussions with various Southerners, the conversation “turned upon

the secession of the southern states," but none of Ruffin's acquaintances were willing to openly advocate separation. They were "contingent or conditional disunionists." Only after John Brown's October 1859 raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry did sentiment swing to secession. Ruffin capitalized on the event by obtaining one of the pikes with which Brown had intended to arm slaves for a planned insurrection and carried it wherever he went, presumably including his August 1860 visit to White Sulphur Springs. During that springs season Ruffin happily claimed that all of the gentlemen "from the cotton states, with whom I have conversed here, are for secession, in the event of Lincoln's election."4 Southerners, or at least those from the cotton-growing states of the Deep South, finally listened to Ruffin's persistent pleas that secession was the only way to preserve Southern interests. Events that he could not control, Brown's raid and Lincoln's election, brought Ruffin the success and acceptance he craved.5 He and others of his fierce secessionism were cheered by the sight of the Rockbridge Rifles, the county militia, camping and drilling on the grounds of Rockbridge Alum Springs during the summer of 1860.6

This atmosphere of competition and hostility ended the dreams of springs promoters like William Burke to strengthen the ties that connected the nation. Rather than bringing people together to realize their commonalties, the springs served to highlight their differences and

6 Lexington Gazette, 2 August 1860.
eventually drove North and South apart. The growth of tourism, and
mineral water resorts in particular, constituted a missed opportunity in
American history. Here was a cultural impulse that appealed to a discrete,
wealthy group of Americans. For much of the early nineteenth century South
Carolina planters and Boston abolitionists drank the same waters and
searched for the same elusive combination of amusement and health.
Northern and Southern entrepreneurs employed comparable business
strategies in operating and promoting their resorts. They also forged similar
compromises between nature and civilization at the springs. And they
articulated the same ambivalence toward the changing social structure of
American society that emphasized social mobility, economically-defined
status, and more elastic gender norms. They even, on occasion, placed their
common social interests above political issues. From these experiences might
have emerged a sense of shared interests and thence a class-based common
culture of leisure and privilege. The springs may have been one of the few
social institutions that united elite Americans during the heightening
political tensions of the 1850s. But instead political precepts and sectional
identities, based primarily on the competing systems of organizing labor and
social structure, disrupted the genteel sociability of springs life. Rather than
crossing or redefining the boundaries of sectional identity, antebellum
Americans reinforced the status quo. If the springs helped create an
aristocracy in colonial America, as Carl Bridenbaugh suggests, they could not

---

8 Peter Onuf has written that few sectional differences, in terms of society and culture, existed in the antebellum era. The Civil War was caused by a failure of the federal political system, not any irrepressible conflict between divergent cultures ("Federalism, Republicanism, and the Origins of American Sectionalism," in Edward L. Ayers, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Stephen Nissenbaum, and Peter S. Onuf, *All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996], 11-15).

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fashion a similar class in the antebellum republic. Sectional identities and tensions triumphed at America's mineral water resorts. Saratoga's more heterogenous clientele and free black waiters moved toward national unity while Virginia's springs and their involuntarily enslaved workforce evolved into an increasingly homogenous society separate from the rest of the nation. Instead of spending the 1860s dancing, drinking, flirting, and dining themselves into dissipation, springs visitors either passed their summers at a diminished, sober resort like Saratoga, or echoed the diary entry of Mary Chesnut. Writing from Fauquier White Sulphur Springs, Virginia in 1861, she commented that "Yesterday we had no mail—but heard cannon."\(^9\)

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Appendix A:  
Chronological List of Springs Analyses to 1817

NEW YORK:


The Rural Magazine, or Vermont Repository. I (September 1795): 451-453.

Timothy Howe, A History of the Medicinal Springs at Saratoga and Ballstown: Being a Brief Account of the Situation, Composition, Operation, and Effects, of the Those Celebrated Waters:--With a Catalogue of all the Diseases, in Which They are Beneficial, or Injurious; and Directions How To Use or Apply Them in Each; Attended With Remarks on the Proper Seasons to Visit Them. the Accommodations. Customs. Expense of Board. &c. Brattleboro, Vermont, 1801.

The original French report was printed by Dr. David Hosack in the Medical Repository Second Hexade, V (1808): 214-215.


"Answer to Dr. Seaman's 'Examination' of a Review, of his Dissertation on the Saratoga and Ballstown Waters, in the second number of this Journal, by the Writer of the Review," New York Medical and Philosophical Journal and Review 2:1 (1810), 145-175.

Hosack, Dr. David. "Observations on the use of the Ballston Mineral Waters, in various diseases; addressed to Mr. John Cook, of Albany, by David Hosack, M.D. Professor of Botany and Materia Medica, in Columbia College," American Medical and Philosophical Register I (1811) 40-47.

Meade, William, M.D. *An Experimental Enquiry in the Chemical Properties and Medicinal Qualities of the Principal Mineral Waters of Ballston and Saratoga, in the State of New York. With Directions for the Use of those Waters in the Various Diseases to which they are applicable; and observations on diet and regimen. To which has been added an Appendix, containing a chemical analysis of the Lebanon Spring in the State of New York.* Philadelphia: Harrison Hall, 1817.

**VIRGINIA:**

Rouelle, John, M.D. *A Complete Treatise on the Mineral Waters of Virginia: Containing a Description of their Situation, their Natural History, their Analysis, Contents, and their Use in Medicine.* Philadelphia: Charles Cist, 1792.


Appendix B:  
Chronological List of  
Individual Springs Studies

SARATOGA:  


VIRGINIA:  
Huntt, Henry, M.D. *Observations on a Change in Climate in Pulmonary Consumption. Read Before the Columbian Institute in 1826, and Published in the Medical and Surgical Journal. With Additional Remarks on the Red Sulphur Springs of Virginia*. Washington: Jacob Gideon, Jr., 1834.


Stringfellow, Rev. Thornton Two Letters on Cases of Cure at Fauquier White Sulphur Springs; Embracing, Also, Mineral Waters in General. Washington: Union Office, 1851.


### Table I: Virginia Springs Incorporations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporation Name</th>
<th>Incorporation Date</th>
<th>Capital ($1000)</th>
<th>Amount/Share ($)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salt Springs</td>
<td>10 December 1794</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm Springs</td>
<td>31 December 1814</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewisburg and Blue Sulphur Springs</td>
<td>1830-31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orkney/Yellow Springs</td>
<td>27 February 1832</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewisburg and Blue Sulphur Springs</td>
<td>1832-33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Sulphur Springs</td>
<td>28 February 1834</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Sulphur Springs</td>
<td>2 January 1835</td>
<td>32-100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grayson Sulphur Springs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Augusta Springs</td>
<td>20 February 1835</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Fauquier White Sulphur Springs</td>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Springs</td>
<td>9 March 1836</td>
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<td>Sweet Springs</td>
<td>18 January 1836</td>
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<td>Red Sulphur Springs</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crystal Sulphur Spring</td>
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<td>20-250</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Dagger's Sulphur Springs</td>
<td>30 March 1837</td>
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<td>Rawley Springs</td>
<td>24 March 1837</td>
<td>50-120</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>Red Sulphur Springs</td>
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<td>270</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shannondale Springs</td>
<td>23 March 1838</td>
<td>39-100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington White Springs</td>
<td>6 April 1838</td>
<td>50-100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augusta Springs</td>
<td>4 March 1839</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick White Sulphur Springs</td>
<td>15 March 1839</td>
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<td>Physic Springs</td>
<td>14 March 1839</td>
<td>25-50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Springs</td>
<td>17 February 1840</td>
<td>100-200</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tazewell White Sulphur</td>
<td>9 March 1840</td>
<td>20-100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kanawha Saline Springs Institute</td>
<td>1841-42</td>
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Table I

<table>
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<th>Corporation Name</th>
<th>Incorporation Date</th>
<th>Capital ($1000)</th>
<th>Amount/Share ($)</th>
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<td>Soda Springs/Howard's Springs</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1842-43</td>
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<td>350</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hot Springs</td>
<td>27 March 1848</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>Buffalo Springs</td>
<td>11 May 1852</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Hardy White Sulphur Springs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Piedmont Springs</td>
<td>3 March 1852</td>
<td>2-100</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huguenot Springs</td>
<td>9 April 1853</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cluster Springs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweet Springs</td>
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<td>1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stribling Springs</td>
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<td>Roanoke Red Sulphur Springs</td>
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<td>Yellow Sulphur Springs</td>
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<td>Green Sulphur Springs</td>
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<td>Chilhowee Springs</td>
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<td>New River White Sulphur Springs</td>
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<td>Montgomery White Sulphur Springs</td>
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<td>Sweet Chalybeate Springs</td>
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<td>Rockbridge White Sulphur Springs</td>
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<td>Capper Springs</td>
<td>27 February 1861</td>
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Table II: Saratoga Springs Chattel Mortgages

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<th>Establishment</th>
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</tr>
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<td>Stanwix Hotel</td>
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<td>National Hall</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Montgomery Hall</td>
<td>24 February 1846</td>
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<td>Lake House</td>
<td>1 April 1845</td>
<td>3,562.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Hotel</td>
<td>18 May 1844</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crawford House</td>
<td>29 April 1844</td>
<td>75.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornucopia</td>
<td>19 August 1844</td>
<td>450.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Holt</td>
<td>7 May 1844</td>
<td>418.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Holt</td>
<td>19 August 1844</td>
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<td>Highland Hall</td>
<td>17 June 1843</td>
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<td>Munger tavern</td>
<td>19 June 1843</td>
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<td>Billiard Room</td>
<td>10 September 1842</td>
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<td>Columbian Hall</td>
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<td>Cornucopia</td>
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<td>Congress Hall</td>
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<td>Freeman Hall</td>
<td>9 August 1841</td>
<td>70.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5 July 1839</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congress Hall</td>
<td>16 September 1835</td>
<td>10,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pavilion Hotel</td>
<td>29 September 1837</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington Grove</td>
<td>19 August 1837</td>
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<td>Washington Grove</td>
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<td>Pavilion Hotel</td>
<td>7 November 1834</td>
<td>1,500.00</td>
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<td>Washington Hall</td>
<td>23 August 1834</td>
<td>1,070.19</td>
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<td>Northern Hotel</td>
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<td>Pavilion Hotel</td>
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<td>$56,482.74</td>
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Average Mortgage: $1,448.28
Table III:
Cost Items from
Virginia Springs Account Ledgers

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<td>Bar</td>
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<td>$428.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bathing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horse Care</td>
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<td>Laundry</td>
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<td>$498.55</td>
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<td>Room/Board</td>
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<td>Mail</td>
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<td>$159.30</td>
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<td>Meals</td>
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<td>Misc.</td>
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N= 1501 cases

Sources:
White Sulphur Springs Day Book, 1827, Greenbrier Archives.
Hot Springs Ledger, 1829-1831, 1833, Folders 28-29, Box 8, Daggs Family
Bath Alum Account Book, 1852, Manuscripts Division, Swem Library, College
   of William and Mary.
Table IV:

Stage and Rail Arrivals at Saratoga Springs, 1840-1841

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
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<td>166</td>
<td>1302</td>
<td>1468</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 2-8</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1456</td>
<td>1628</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 9-15</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>1364</td>
<td>1527</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 16-23</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>3557</td>
<td>3726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1-11, 1841</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>1714</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 12-18</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1146</td>
<td>1326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 19-25</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>1524</td>
<td>1813</td>
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Source: Saratoga Whig, appropriate dates.
Map 1: Gideon Putnam's Plan for Saratoga, 1810

Box 1, Deeds, 1791-1812, Putnam Family Papers
New York State Historical Association
Map 2: The Virginia Springs Region, 1857.

Map 3: White Sulphur Springs Layout, 1847.

John J. Moorman, The Virginia Springs with their Analysis, 44.
Map 4: Saratoga Springs, 1847.

Figure 1: Fauquier White Sulphur Springs, 1849

John W. Jarvis Diary, 1849
Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia

A brick fortress and fort
B. Curves
C. Elevated block of stone 2 stories high
D. A walled space for keeping cattle in
II. Building ice or cool beds
Figure 2: Congress Hall, 1841.

Figure 3: Botetourt Springs Cabin Interior

John H.B. Latrobe, 1832, Hollins College Archives

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Figure 4: Rockbridge Alum Springs Cabin Layout, 1861

William Frazier, Rockbridge Alum Springs, 16 February 1861, to John R. Knight, Magnolia, Florida, Folder, Letters, 1858-1861, Box, Letters, 1851-1881, John Knight Letters, 1788-1891, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University

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VITA

Thomas A. Chambers